



London Borough of Merton

Report and recommendations arising from the scrutiny task group review of civil unrest in Merton

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

September 2012

Task group membership

Councillor Peter Southgate (Chair)
Councillor Iain Dysart
Councillor Jeff Hanna
Councillor Ray Tindle
Andrew Boxall, co-opted member

Scrutiny support:

Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services
For further information relating to the review, please contact:

Democracy Services Team
Corporate Services Department
London Borough of Merton
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
Surrey SM4 5DX

Tel: 020 8545 3864
E-mail: scrutiny@merton.gov.uk

Acknowledgements

The task group would like to thank the police, probation and council officers who provided written information and came to meetings to discuss their work with us.

All contributors are listed in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of this report.

Index	Page
Foreword by the Chair of the Task Group	4
Executive summary	5
List of recommendations	6
Introduction	8
Riots in August 2011 – the national context	9
What happened in Merton	10
Partnership working	12
Communication issues	13
Arrests	14
Motivation of those involved	15
Preventing future civil unrest:	17
Employability	17
Provision of youth activities	17
Troubled Families Initiative	17
Perception of the police	18
Emergency planning	19
Concluding remarks	20
What happens next?	21
Appendices	
Appendix 1: list of written evidence	23
Appendix 2: list of oral evidence	24
Appendix 3: recommendations arising from Scrutiny Review on Post 16 Career Pathways, April 2012	25

Foreword by the Review Chair

It is now more than a year since riots, arson and looting flashed across London on the evening of Monday 8 August 2011, affecting 23 (?) of the 32 London boroughs. Merton was not spared; serious disturbances were concentrated around the Priory Centre and Tandem Centre in Colliers Wood, although unrest also affected Wimbledon and Mitcham. Set in context though, disturbances in the neighbouring boroughs of Croydon and Wandsworth were far more widespread and serious, and the resulting damage greater. But any unrest in Merton is cause for concern, and Council rightly asked the Commission to review what had happened and decide what lessons might be learned.

Thousands of words have been written since then on the causes of the riots, and we chose to delay our own enquiry to have the benefit of the findings from other reviews. None provide a simple answer, but they do suggest how such an outbreak of disorder might be prevented in future.

In Merton as elsewhere police found themselves greatly outnumbered by rioters in the Tandem Centre, and were forced to withdraw for their own safety. For an hour or so thereafter the legal constraints that govern acceptable behaviour appeared to be suspended, and it seemed possible to riot and loot with impunity.

What happened next raises the most crucial question for our enquiry – given the same opportunity, why did some youths (thankfully a minority in Merton) join in the disturbances while others chose not to get involved?

Our report asks questions of the police to see how they would respond to a similar threat of disorder in the future. It also contains recommendations designed to help young people make the right decision if they are ever confronted with a similar situation again ie. stay away, don't get involved. Some of these recommendations are for improving communications via social media, others call for our youth service to provide appropriate help and guidance to those most at risk.

This has been an unusually demanding review and I would like to thank all members of the task group for devoting so many hours of their time to it. I hope they found it as rewarding as I did. But we would never have got started, let alone reached the recommendations in the report before you now, without the patient support and lucid analysis and presentation of Julia Regan, our scrutiny manager. We are indebted to her for all her hard work.

Councillor Peter Southgate
Chair, Civil Unrest Task Group

Executive Summary

The task group was set up in order to investigate and identify lessons learned from the civil unrest that took place in parts of Colliers Wood, Wimbledon and Mitcham in August 2011.

The report is evidence based, drawing on and reflecting the wide range of written and oral evidence received. The task group questioned senior police, probation and council managers as well as reading the reviews carried out by the National Riots Communities and Victims Panel, the Metropolitan Police Service and other London boroughs.

The task group found that the police response in Merton was affected by officers being called away to deal with the rioting that had started earlier in other parts of London. The Metropolitan Police Service has carried out a thorough review and has addressed lessons learned. The task group has recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission question the Borough Commander about future levels of policing and arrangements for securing additional officers in the event of an emergency.

Recommendations have also been made to address lessons learned in relation to communication with local businesses, community leaders, residents and young people.

The task group has discussed and made recommendations relating to preventative work, in particular to target support to those young people (including the 18-24 age group) who are most in need and to monitor the impact of the Troubled Families Initiative in order to address any ongoing need.

List of task group's recommendations

	Responsible decision making body
Recommendation 1 (paragraph 27)	
We recommend that the Borough Commander provide a written statement setting out what mechanisms are available to the police locally for drawing in additional resources in an emergency and what changes have been made to those procedures in the light of the widespread unrest experienced in August 2011.	Police
Recommendation 2 (paragraph 28)	
We recommend that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission invite the Borough Commander to attend a meeting in order to discuss the level of police resources that will be deployed in the borough after the Olympics, including the number of public order trained officers.	Overview and Scrutiny Commission Police
Recommendation 3 (paragraph 31)	
We recommend that a list of drivers who would be willing to volunteer during any future emergency is drawn up and that appropriate advice is issued to them immediately so that they understand the limits around what they may be asked to do.	Cabinet
Recommendation 4 (paragraph 32)	
We further recommend that no volunteer driver should be put in a position where they would not be covered by insurance.	Cabinet
Recommendation 5 (paragraph 36)	
We recommend that the council's corporate management team identify who in the council is best placed to maintain contact lists for businesses and community leaders that can be used by the police and other partners during an emergency. Officers should review existing options and identify the most suitable contact lists for future use.	Cabinet
Recommendation 6 (paragraph 40)	
We recommend that the Head of Communications identify the best ways in which the Council could post website and social media messages during any future emergency situations to encourage positive behaviour and support from local residents.	Cabinet

Recommendation 7 (paragraph 50)	
We recommend that Cabinet explore with the corporate management team the scoping of new service for those 18-24 year olds at risk of anti-social behaviour, but not currently supported by any existing service, including a business case relating to the costs and benefits of commissioning such a service.	Cabinet
Recommendation 8 (paragraph 51)	
We further recommend that Cabinet consider the role of central government, and whether the relevant Minister should be lobbied to review the need for such a service - whilst recognising the role that voluntary sector organisations might have.	
Recommendation 9 (paragraph 65)	
We recommend that the work by the youth service to identify appropriate provision for the young people who are most in need is widened to assess need more generally and advise on resources necessary to address this, not precluding the possibility of making a growth bid.	Cabinet
Recommendation 10 (paragraph 79)	
We recommend that the police continue to review how the way in which stop and search is carried out locally and the information provided at the time could be changed to minimise the perception of unfair treatment. This could include a clearly written flyer (with a phone number for feedback), visiting youth clubs and taking other opportunities for positive interactions that will build good relationships with young people.	Police
Recommendation 11 (paragraph 80)	
We recommend that there is a discussion at the headteachers group, to which the police are invited, on whether it would be helpful to ask the school based police officers (or another police officer) to talk to pupils about stop and search.	Headteachers Group Police

Report of the Civil Unrest Scrutiny Task Group

Introduction

Purpose

1. Council, at its meeting on 23 September 2011, discussed the civil unrest that took place in parts of Colliers Wood, Wimbledon and Mitcham in August 2011. Council resolved that the Scrutiny Commission and/ or relevant Panels should receive and consider a report of events in Merton, and discuss any consequent initiatives which might usefully be pursued for the benefit of the authority, its partners and the wider community.
2. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission, at its meetings in October 2011 and February 2012, discussed the request from Council and agreed to set up a task group review to investigate these issues and to draw on and add value to the evaluation work being carried out locally, regionally and nationally.
3. The task group's terms of reference were:
 - to investigate the scale and intensity of the riots in Merton
 - to obtain a police account of their response to the riots
 - to receive an analysis of the profiles of those arrested and charged
 - to investigate how the Council works with disaffected youth
 - to make recommendations for change, based on analysis of lessons learned in Merton, London and nationally.

What the task group did

4. From the outset, task group members agreed that they wished to keep the review as evidence based and focussed on Merton as possible. The task group has had six meetings at which a wide range of evidence has been considered including national, regional and local reports as well as discussion with the police, Safer Merton, youth service and emergency planning. One of the task group members attended a seminar at Kingston University on young people, gangs and the riots.
5. The Cabinet Members for Children Services and for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities attended task group meetings to give their views on the unrest and to discuss the task group's emerging recommendations.
6. Appendix 1 lists the written evidence received by the task group and Appendix 2 lists the witnesses at each meeting.
7. This report sets out the task group's findings, conclusions and recommendations. The task group's recommendations run throughout the report and are set out in full in the Executive Summary at the front of this document.

Riots in August 2011 – the national context

8. Over five days in August 2011 around 15,000 people rioted, looting and damaging town centres in 66 different areas across England. The government established the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel, chaired by Darra Singh, to investigate the causes of the riots and to consider what more could be done to build greater social and economic resilience in communities.
9. The Riots, Communities and Victims Panel found that there was no single underlying cause for the riots. It also found that the disorder that started in Tottenham was different in nature from the riots that followed in other areas. It identified a number of factors, including a link between deprivation and rioting. It profiled five broad categories of rioters, who were largely young adults:
 - organised criminals – often from outside the area
 - violent aggressors – who committed the most serious crimes, such as arson and violent attacks on the police
 - late night shoppers – people who deliberately travelled to riot sites in order to loot
 - opportunists – people who were drawn into riot area through curiosity or a sense of excitement and then became ‘caught up in the moment’
 - spectators – people who came just to watch the rioting
10. The Riots, Communities and Victims Panel concluded that the key to avoiding future riots is to build social and economic resilience in communities in order to have “communities that work”. It recognised that the approach to achieving this will be different in different places. Its recommendations included early family intervention (wider than the troubled families programme), support for the most educationally disadvantaged and for those not in education, employment or training (NEETs), intensive alternatives to custody and support following release from custody as well as measures to improve public perception of police integrity.
11. Policing issues have been examined separately by a Home Affairs Select Committee, by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and by the Metropolitan Police Service (4 Days in August). These have addressed tactical policing issues as well as issues around communication and community engagement. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) report concluded that the MPS engagement, intelligence and operational response plans were not sufficient to respond to the unprecedented scale and speed of the riots as they developed.
12. In London a number of local authorities (such as Croydon and Ealing) as well as the London Assembly and London Councils have carried out reviews of the riots, examining responses and lessons learned. These regional and national findings have all helped to inform our questioning of witnesses and subsequently to shape the recommendations that we have made in this report.

What happened in Merton

13. Chief Inspector Mark Lawrence told us that the situation was unprecedented in the way that disorder spread across London and that this could not have been anticipated in advance. He stressed that contingencies were in place and that the police were not caught off guard. However, we found that there was an impact on how the police were able to respond locally because public order officers were sent to other areas of London where disorder had broken out earlier on.
14. Following a weekend of rioting in north London on 6 and 7 August, the police received intelligence from different sources suggesting that there were likely to be disturbances in Merton on 8 August. Local areas identified as potentially being affected were the Tandem Centre and the Priory Centre in Colliers Wood as well as Mitcham, Wimbledon and Sutton town centres.
15. The police responded to this information by putting a Section 60 Order in place so that stop and search could be carried out in those areas. They also asked for additional resources to be provided from elsewhere in London, but due to the widespread nature of the rioting, none were available at that point.
16. On the afternoon of 8 August, Safer Neighbourhood Officers visited shops and businesses around the Tandem Centre and Mitcham Town Centre warning them that intelligence had been received about rioting and urging them to close early. Businesses responded positively - all outlets in the Tandem Centre and Priory Centre elected to close early and all were closed by 5 pm.
17. Small numbers of young people started gathering in pockets in the vicinity of the Tandem Centre from about 6 pm. A police presence was maintained. Numbers started to rise steadily with small numbers of people arriving in the area from different directions, some from Colliers Wood Underground and High Street and others from the Mitcham side. At this point the atmosphere was calm and there were no obvious signs of trouble. All available police resources were brought into or near to the area - police officers were kept on duty and those off duty were called in.
18. As it became dark information started filtering through of significant outbreaks of disorder across London, most notably for Merton in Croydon and Wandsworth. Trouble started in Croydon before Merton and at a more significant level. Despite further requests for external resources none were available to assist the borough. During this time police continued to bring in officers from other duties and those off duty.
19. At this point there were around 200 people of varying ages, gender and ethnicity gathered around the Tandem Centre. Two police vehicles and

approximately 20 local borough police officers were at the scene. Flats were evacuated above Jessops in the Tandem Centre as a precaution.

20. The police left one of their vehicles at the north entrance to the Tandem Centre and the other was despatched to protect the petrol station, while efforts were made to get the pumps turned off. Around 10.30pm trouble flared. A number of men raised scarves over their faces and one attempted to break the door of one of the retail units. At this point one police vehicle was attacked by a large number of people who started rocking it violently and other police officers were chased by large groups. Police tried to hold their ground for as long as they could but the officers were significantly outnumbered and under significant risk of physical violence.
21. At this juncture, the duty officer made the decision to withdraw the police presence from the Tandem Centre. A cordon was established in a ring around the location to prevent any further vehicles going into the location. The cordons were kept in place for around an hour until public order officers arrived – these are officers specially trained and provided with equipment to deal with these situations.
22. At this point, police went back into the Tandem Centre and dispersed the crowd. This was completed reasonably quickly and without incident. Dog units were called in to clear businesses and arrest any offenders still within premises. Efforts were made to locate and arrest offenders.
23. The following morning intelligence was received saying that there would be further disturbances. This was prevented by the action taken at the instigation of the Gold Group (a multi-agency strategy group). Action included the use of stop and search to arrest troublemakers as they arrived in Wimbledon town centre.
24. From 9 August police rest days were cancelled, significant mutual aid was secured from outside police forces and a pod was created at Wimbledon Police Station to monitor intelligence, manage resource allocation and link in with the Council's CCTV team. This continued throughout August with no further outbreaks of disorder.
25. We have been informed that the post-riot review by the Metropolitan Police Service identified the policing lessons learnt and has resulted in an uplift in the number of public order trained officers and amendments to the process for mobilising officers across the capital. Chief Inspector Lawrence told us that he was confident that their internal processes have addressed all policing issues
26. In the light of the time lapse between the police requesting additional officers and those being sent, we believe that it would be helpful for the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to seek information on what mechanisms are available to the police locally for drawing in additional resources in an emergency and to seek evidence that these are robust.

27. **We therefore recommend that the Borough Commander provide a written statement setting out what mechanisms are available to the police locally for drawing in additional resources in an emergency and what changes have been made to those procedures in the light of the widespread unrest experienced in August 2011. (recommendation 1)**
28. **We further recommend that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission invite the Borough Commander to attend a meeting in order to discuss the level of police resources that will be deployed in the borough after the Olympics, including the number of public order trained officers. (recommendation 2)**

Partnership working

29. Chief Inspector Lawrence praised the support given to the police by the council, the fire service, local businesses and residents. We understand that the council helped in a number of ways:
 - council minibuses and drivers were provided to replace vandalised police cars – further detail in paragraph 30 below. The police have re-imbursed the council for damage to the vehicles.
 - The police were given free parking in a council car park in Queens Road for three days when their own car park was unavailable and because officers had been attacked walking to their cars.
 - The CCTV service were put on standby as soon as information was received that the Tandem Centre would be targeted. CCTV images have been provided to the police
 - the street cleaning service prioritised the affected areas for a clean-up afterwards
 - the emergency planning officer and Head of Safer Merton were involved in advising, communicating and co-ordinating throughout and a full Borough Emergency Continuity Centre was set up and ready for the second day
 - the council's local authority liaison officer (LALO) assisted the police, particularly in relation to the possible evacuation of householders in the affected area. LALOs are provided through a rota of senior council officers who have been trained to take on these duties.
30. The council drivers who worked with the police were refuse vehicle drivers who volunteered to help out and worked in this capacity for three days, paid for by the council. We applaud the generous action taken by these drivers in volunteering to help the police but had some concerns about them being placed in an unsafe situation. We were assured that the drivers were accompanied by police officers at all times, thus ensuring their safety.

31. **We recommend that a list of drivers who would be willing to volunteer during any future emergency is drawn up and that appropriate advice is issued to them immediately so that they understand the limits around what they may be asked to do. (recommendation 3)** Note – this was identified as an urgent recommendation in an email sent by the task group chair to the Director of Corporate Services in July.
32. **We further recommend that no volunteer driver should be put in a position where they would not be covered by insurance. (recommendation 4)**

Communication issues

33. We were informed that community liaison during a public order incident is the responsibility of the police and afterwards passes to the council through the Safer Merton team.
34. We heard that access was provided to business contact details held on the Merton Chamber of Commerce's database during the unrest and that this was helpful to the police. This access is not automatic in an emergency situation and was made possible only by the availability of a key individual.
35. We recognise that each emergency situation will be different and so will require contact with different groups of people. We do believe however that it is essential that contact lists of local businesses and community representatives are held within the Council so that they can be used as and when required. We also recognise that no contact list will be 100% inclusive, particularly those which, like the Chamber of Commerce's, are opt-in. We note that other contact mechanisms do exist, including the police's "community safe" database (also an opt-in database).
36. **We recommend that the council's corporate management team identify who in the council is best placed to maintain contact lists for businesses and community leaders that can be used by the police and other partners during an emergency. Officers should review existing options and identify the most suitable contact lists for future use. (recommendation 5)** Note – this was identified as an urgent recommendation in an email sent by the task group chair to the Directors of Corporate Services and Environment and Regeneration in July.
37. We understand that social media were used by young people and by the authorities during the events of August 2011. Facebook and Twitter were used by the police to gather information and to post messages. Intelligence gathered by the local authority, including via social media, was shared with the police.

38. The young people consulted after the riots, cited social media as the reason that news about the rioting spread so quickly. One youngster suggested that the police could have posted messages on the internet about the consequences of taking part in order to discourage potential rioters.
39. Council and voluntary sector youth workers phoned all the young people with whom they worked in order to dissuade them from taking part in any unrest that might take place. We understand that these messages were well received by the young people.
- 40. We recommend that the Head of Communications identify the best ways in which the Council could post website and social media messages during any future emergency situations to encourage positive behaviour and support from local residents, including young people. (recommendation 6)**

Arrests

41. Data published by the Ministry of Justice provides information on the 3051 individuals brought before the courts in relation to the public disorder in August 2011 (data relates to the period up to 8 June 2012). Of these, 2194 were from London. 27% of all defendants and 26% of the Londoners were under 18.
42. We were shown police data on the riot-related arrests made in the south west London hub up to 26 March 2012. Of the 351 arrests in the region, 284 (81%) were male and 106 (30%) were juveniles. We have been informed by the police that in Merton the average age was slightly lower than elsewhere.
43. The youth service provided information on the 21 Merton juvenile residents who have been arrested, charged and brought to court. 16 (76%) were male. 9 were aged 17, the others were younger.
44. Most of these young people were not previously known to the youth offending team. We were struck, however, by the correlation with school exclusions. Most had had more than one fixed term exclusion and had been referred to social care (but not to child protection), indicating a level of challenging behaviour that parents and schools were struggling with.
45. We were informed that the level of custodial sentences for under 18s in Merton has been lower than in neighbouring boroughs. 11 young people received community orders, to which reparative tasks were assigned such as painting out graffiti, picking up litter and other tasks to improve the area.
46. We understand that the majority of those involved in the unrest in Merton were young adults (the 18-24 age group). We were informed that of the 300+ local people charged with riot-related offences, only 15 were

previously known to Merton and Sutton Probation Service and that 13 of these were aged 18-24 (the other two were in their late 20s).

47. The probation service works with offenders who have been sentenced at court to a community order with probation attached or who have been released from prison after serving a 12 month sentence (except for those aged 18-21 who have probation involvement after a sentence of any length).
48. We heard that although there is no typical offending pattern for young people, it is clear that the majority of offending occurs between the ages of 18 and 24 and that most stop offending by 24. Those that haven't stopped by that age tend to go on offending longer term, often linked to other problems such as substance misuse.
49. We understand that the over-representation of the 18-24 age group in crime and the lack of support services (other than probation) for these youngsters is a national issue. We would wish, however, to seek ways in which this age group can be reached in order to address the high level of offending between 18 and 24. We note that the Council has statutory responsibilities for working with under 25s if they are disabled, mentally ill, care leavers or if they misuse drugs or alcohol. We understand that some voluntary organisations also work with that age group and Safer Merton refer people to them.
- 50. We recommend that Cabinet explore with the corporate management team the scoping of new service for those 18-24 year olds at risk of anti-social behaviour, but not currently supported by any existing service, including a business case relating to the costs and benefits of commissioning such a service. (recommendation 7)**
- 51. We further recommend that Cabinet consider the role of central government, and whether the relevant Minister should be lobbied to review the need for such a service - whilst recognising the role that voluntary sector organisations might have. (recommendation 8)**

Motivation of those involved

52. In response to questions about the motivation of those involved in the disorder, the police and council officers with whom we spoke, identified a range of different reasons for getting involved:
 - some (particularly younger local people) went along to see what was going on but then got caught up in the heat of the moment and joined in the looting
 - others were clearly intent on causing trouble from the outset
 - police were a target for those who wanted to vent frustration and anger.

53. We were informed that drug and alcohol had not been contributory factors and that there was no evidence of drug or alcohol use during the disturbances.
54. After the riots, a number of different consultations were organised by Merton Voluntary Services Council, the police and the Council to seek views from different groups of young people, including those working with the youth offending team and those involved (or previously involved) in gangs.
55. Feedback from consultation with young people indicates that the majority do not condone the violence or the looting. Feedback from those involved with the youth offending team and from gang members indicates that they chose not to get involved in the disturbances.
56. The youth offending team spoke to the young offenders with whom they had contact in the week following the riots. These young people posited various reasons for the riots, including opportunistic involvement, feeling alienated and hopeless, as well as stupidity. All thought that the police response should have been stronger. Most thought that the riots would not recur.
57. A meeting between the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Chief Inspector Mark Lawrence and some young gang members was held at their request. They had not been involved in the unrest but knew people who were and wanted to share their views about this and other issues. They stated that they had chosen not to get involved because they knew it was wrong. When asked why they thought those people had got involved in the unrest they said they had nothing to do, no jobs and no money.
58. Two strands of work have come from this meeting:
 - a subsequent meeting with a wider group of young people, during which music was identified as an activity that they enjoy. They are now involved in organising a Merton's Got Youth Talent evening.
 - the Cabinet Member for Children's Services visited an employability project in Brixton and a piece of work is being taken forward for a newsletter to be written, produced and distributed by young people. The Council has obtained money for this project.
59. We were impressed with the Cabinet Member's initiative in following up on the meetings to address young peoples' views that there is not enough to do and asked what else could be provided to reach those young people. She said it is difficult to address this issue because any officially organised activity tends to be seen as "not cool" so she has been trying to attract young people who think that way and get them involved in organising their own activities.
60. We believe that the perception of some young people that there is nothing for them to do, no jobs and no money indicates a need for the

Council to seek to address these issues through communication of available youth activities and places to go for further support. The work that we have described above is helpful but will reach relatively small numbers.

Preventing future civil unrest

Employability

61. We considered how best to motivate young people at a time when it is difficult for them to find employment. We understand that the Council and the Merton Chamber of Commerce already works with local businesses to help local people find work and to sponsor apprenticeships.
62. We also noted that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel's current task group on post-16 pathways will include recommendations that will go some way towards addressing ways to help young people gain appropriate education and skills and find work. These recommendations are listed in Appendix 3.

Provision of youth activities

63. We heard that the withdrawal of funding had led to the end of the summer university scheme that had been very good in providing activities and opportunities for young people in the borough. Other summer schemes are still being run by youth centres and voluntary sector providers.
64. We were informed that the youth service is keen to identify appropriate provision for the young people who were most in need, and are seeking to find opportunities to fund something within existing resources (perhaps jointly with other boroughs and/or with sponsorship from businesses). We would wish to see this work evidenced by data on the number of young people who need that sort of support, how many of these we already work with and how many are known to safer neighbourhood officers.
65. **We recommend that the work by the youth service to identify appropriate provision for the young people who are most in need is widened to assess need more generally and advise on resources necessary to address this, not precluding the possibility of making a growth bid. (recommendation 9)**
66. We were pleased to hear that the national citizenship service, a government funded scheme for year 11 students, run locally by The Challenge, will offer some opportunities for local young people. The scheme is open to any 16 year olds in Merton. Young people from Merton will attend with other young people they don't know and do an outward bound type course, then a residential course to look at action they can take and support through volunteering back in their communities. The scheme is working with the second cohort of Merton

young people attending and the youth service is trying to ensure that some young people are supported to attend.

Troubled Families Initiative

67. We have been very impressed with the approach taken by this three year multi-agency programme that will target 370 families most in need of intensive support. Support will be provided through a six month programme of work with each family (124 families per year), tailored to their individual needs and drawing in expert support. There will also be some community development work in targeted geographical areas.
68. We were informed that the work will be cost effective because these are families that already receive support from a number of different agencies. It is also expected that the work will build on existing good practice locally and elsewhere.
69. We were pleased to hear that participants in the Troubled Families Initiative will be monitored beyond the six month programme in order to assess the impact of the programme and to address any ongoing need.

Perception of the Police

70. We also considered the impact that the relationship between the police and young people might have on the potential for any future unrest. We heard that young people make a clear distinction between school based officers, safer neighbourhood officers and those who carry out stop and search and make arrests. We were pleased to hear that the new Borough Commander is keen to build positive relationships between young people and the police and has already identified opportunities for doing so (e.g. the Boxing Academy).
71. We discussed the use of stop and search with police officers (both strategic and operational) and with the Chair of Merton's Stop and Search Monitoring Group. Last year around 9500 people were stopped and searched in Merton, a higher than average figure for the borough, partly due to the disturbances in August. 8.6% of those stopped and searched in Merton were arrested last year (2011/12).
72. This year there were 494 stop and searches carried out in March and April – 115 (23%) of these were aged 10-17 and 218 (44%) were aged 18-24.
73. We heard that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner has set a challenging 20% arrest target for 2012/13 (not achieved by any borough in 2011/12). Additionally, police powers under Section 60 which previously enabled a blanket approach to stop and search in a given geographical area has been considerably reduced. Now the use of Section 60 in relation to 'pre planned events' must be with the authority of an officer of at least the rank of Commander (that is the rank above Chief Superintendent).

74. This change to the use of Section 60, combined with an increasingly intelligence-led approach, should increase the arrest rate and evidence shows that it is already increasing in Merton - 11% in March and 13% in April.
75. The Commissioner has also made it clear that stop and search encounters should be positive and police locally are working to ensure that this is the case. We heard that officers are trained on how to approach the person and to explain what they are doing and why. Officers reported that the majority of stop and searches are very low key and the number of complaints received is low.
76. We heard that the Merton Stop and Search Monitoring Group has worked hard to make sure that people are aware of their rights and know how to make a complaint as it can be daunting to do so. They are particularly keen to communicate these messages to young people and have visited school and youth clubs to do so.
77. We examined blank stop and search forms and the “police stops” yellow leaflet, produced by the Monitoring Group. We made a number of suggestions on how the police could seek feedback on their stop and search performance, which we understand the police will consider implementing as a pilot exercise.
78. We have found that a key factor in young people’s perception of stop and search and of the police more generally, is the way in which stop and search has been carried out in the past. We hope that the changing approach to stop and search will help to improve relations between the police and young people.
79. **We recommend that the police continue to review how the way in which stop and search is carried out locally and the information provided at the time could be changed to minimise the perception of unfair treatment. This could include a clearly written flyer (with a phone number for feedback), visiting youth clubs and taking other opportunities for positive interactions that will build good relationships with young people. (recommendation 10)**
80. **We further recommend that there is a discussion at the headteachers group, to which the police are invited, on whether it would be helpful to ask the school based police officers (or another police officer) to talk to pupils about stop and search. (recommendation 11)**

Emergency planning

81. The Civil Contingency Act requires all local authorities to have robust plans in place to deal with an emergency or incident that would pose a significant threat to the country, either to human welfare, the environment or an act of terrorism.

82. We examined the Council's corporate emergency plan and questioned the Head of Safety Services about the Council's responsibilities, how the Council responded to the civil unrest and what lessons have been learned. We took steps to identify what contingency plans have been put in place to deal with similar situations should they arise in future. We have been assured that all learning from August 2011 has been shared with the appropriate services.
83. If an emergency occurs out of office hours, as in this case, the Council's Mascot team is responsible for contacting the Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO), who will act as a contact and liaison point between the local authority and the emergency services. We heard that lack of experience within the Mascot team led to a short (14 minute) delay in establishing contact with the LALO officer. This contact was made within the target 60 minutes and prior to a formal request from the police for LALO assistance.
84. We understand that access to the list of council officers on LALO duty and other key council contacts has been improved so that senior officers will be able to get these quickly from the Mascot team in future. We were pleased to hear that the Head of Safety Services and the Mascot team manager have worked together to improve procedures and to carry out regular reviews to ensure that all staff are up-to-speed.
85. We remain concerned about lack of knowledge within the Council about how to access contact information for local businesses and community representatives and have therefore made a recommendation to address this (see recommendation 4 in paragraph 34 of this report).

Concluding remarks

86. We found that the police response in Merton was affected by officers being called away to deal with the rioting that had started earlier in other parts of London. The Metropolitan Police Service has carried out a thorough review and has addressed lessons learned. We have recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission question the Borough Commander about future levels of policing and arrangements for securing additional officers in the event of an emergency.
87. We were impressed by the effectiveness of partnership working during and after the unrest. We are particularly grateful to the refuse vehicle drivers who volunteered to drive police officers in council minibuses when the police vans had been vandalised. We have recommended that, as a matter of urgency, a list of drivers who would be willing to volunteer during any future emergency is drawn up and that appropriate advice is issued to them immediately so that they understand the limits around what they may be asked to do.

88. We have given some thought to the council's role in communicating with local residents and businesses. Each emergency situation will be different and will require a different response but contact lists should be maintained so that these can be used by the police and other partners as required. We have also recommended that consideration is given to the most effective way to communicate messages to encourage positive behaviour and support from local residents (including young people) during any future emergency situations.
89. The majority of those involved in the unrest locally were aged 18-25, with a further 25-30% aged under 18. Information from the youth service indicate that the most of the under 18s involved had had more than one fixed term exclusion and had been referred to social care (but not to child protection), indicating a level of challenging behaviour that parents and schools were struggling with.
90. We are aware that the over-representation of the 18-24 age group in crime and the lack of support services (other than probation) for these youngsters is a national issue. We would wish, however, to seek ways in which this age group can be reached in order to address the high level of offending and so we have recommended that Cabinet explore the scoping of new service for 18-24 year olds, including a business case relating to the costs and benefits of commissioning such a service and recognising the role that voluntary sector organisations might have.
91. We applaud the prompt action taken by the youth service to contact the young people with whom they were working and advise them not to get involved. We were also impressed with action taken subsequently by Merton Voluntary Service Council, the council and the police to talk to young people about what happened, as well as the action taken by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to address the view that there is not enough for young people to do.
92. We have considered what preventative measures could be taken and have made recommendations to target support to those young people who are most in need and to monitor the impact of the Troubled Families Initiative in order to address any ongoing need.

What happens next?

93. This task group was established by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission and so this report will be presented to its meeting on 26 September 2012 for the Commission's approval.
94. The Commission will then send the report to the Council's Cabinet on 22 October 2012 for initial discussion.
95. Cabinet will be asked to provide a formal response to the Commission within two months.

96. Cabinet will be asked to respond to each of the task group's recommendations, setting out whether the recommendation is accepted and how and when it will be implemented. If the Cabinet is unable to support and implement some of the recommendations, then it is expected that clearly stated reasons will be provided for each.
97. The lead Cabinet Member (or officer to whom this work is delegated) should ensure that other organisations, such as the Police, to whom recommendations have been directed are contacted and that their response to those recommendations is included in the report.
98. A further report will be sought by the Commission six months after the Cabinet response has been received, giving an update on progress with implementation of the recommendations.

Appendices

Appendix 1: written evidence

Reports of the National Riots Communities and Victims Panel:

- interim report – 5 Days in August, 28 November 2011
- final report – After the riots, March 2012

London Councils – responding to the riots and promoting safe, resilient communities

Report to Merton Corporate Management Team, 13 September 2011 – civil unrest – lessons learned

Metropolitan Police Service - 4 Days in August, Strategic Review into the Disorder of August 2011, Final Report, March 2012

London Assembly scrutiny of the response to disturbances in London during August 2011, 31 August 2011

Report of Ealing Riots Scrutiny Review Panel 2011/12

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham - The Community Safety Partnership's Response to the Disturbances in the Borough, Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee, 4 October 2011

Disorder in Wandsworth, Report of the Independent Review, Neil Kingham, 28 September 2011

Youth Inclusion Team, evidence related to the riots and looting disorder Summer 2011, 29 March 2012

London Borough of Hackney - Write up of the discussion which took place at the 14th November 2011 Partnership Event

London Borough of Merton, Major Incident Plan, 17 January 2011

London Borough of Merton, Multi-agency Major Incident Recovery Plan, January 2012

Local Government Information Unit, The 2011 Summer Riots: one year on, how is local government working to prevent and respond to future riots, August 2012

Appendix 2: list of oral evidence

Speakers:

Chief Inspector Mark Lawrence, 29 March 2012

Therea Leavy, Interim Head of Children's Social Care & Youth Inclusion, 29 March, 22 May and 5 September 2012

Keith Shipman, Education & Youth Inclusion Manager, 29 March, 22 May and 5 September 2012

Annalise Elliott, Head of Safer Merton, 25 April 2012

Councillor Maxi Martin, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, 25 April and 5 September 2012

Police Philip Palmer, Chief Inspector Operations, 22 May 2012

Sergeant Charlie Fleury, 22 May 2012

Constable Sue Clarke, 22 May 2012

Christine Matthews, Chair of Merton's Stop and Search Monitoring Group, 22 May 2012

Gordon Murray, Troubled Families Coordinator, 22 May 2012

Adam Viccarri, Head of Safety Services, 5 July 2012

Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, 5 September 2012

Mark Johnstone, Assistant Chief Officer, Merton and Sutton Probation Service, 5 September 2012

Appendix 3

Recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Review on Post 16 Career Pathways, Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Panel, April 2012

Recommendations
Recommendation 1 That the Council support the further development of existing links between businesses, schools and universities to support post 16 career pathways.
Recommendation 2 That the Council, engaging all relevant departments, seeks to increase the number of apprenticeships and opportunities available to young people through the: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tendering process;• Community Plan;• Regeneration Plans for Merton;• Family Poverty Strategy and Action Plan; and• Existing links with schools
Recommendation 3 That the Council act as a point of contact for voluntary and community sector groups seeking to engage with the apprenticeship and citizenship opportunities available, using appointed champions in the council, where possible.
Recommendation 4 That the Council audit and bring together the range of initiatives currently delivered across the borough to ensure a cohesive service is offered online and ensures improved access to information for young people, parents and carers and schools.
Recommendation 5 That schools be encouraged by the Council to build upon the existing positive collaboration between institutions to further improve the vocational offer at sixth form.
Recommendation 6 That a dedicated officer be identified to develop relationships with local businesses to increase the support and opportunities available to young people.
Recommendation 7 That the Council look to develop a mutually beneficial partnership approach with local businesses to encourage them to offer apprenticeships, sponsor school events, advise on career paths, undertake a mentoring role and to sit on school governing bodies.