

This Council welcomes the achievements of our local police together with the Safer Merton partnership team in ensuring that overall crime levels in Merton remain low and that the borough retains its position as one of the safest in London. Improved satisfaction rates and falling crime rates, both in Merton and across London, have been achieved by relentlessly focusing resources on front line policing and by cutting bureaucracy and unnecessary targets wherever possible, in line with Government policy, so that Merton's police officers can concentrate all their efforts on the primary objective of cutting crime.

However, this Council recognises that the fear of crime remains a major concern for many of Merton's residents and notes the comments of the Borough Commander at November's meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission about the need for an additional policing unit in Wimbledon Town Centre. Attracting many visitors as a major transport hub and the centre of Merton's night time economy, Wimbledon Town Centre is the borough's crime hotspot and the main centre for drunken disorder in the borough, with Abbey and Trinity wards consistently having the highest percentage of alcohol related call outs to the police and London Ambulance Service. 45% of all thefts from the person last year took place in Wimbledon whilst figures suggest that around a fifth of the total number of crimes in Merton were committed in Abbey, Trinity and Dundonald wards with some 7% of overall crime in the borough taking place within just 200 metres on or around Wimbledon Broadway.

This Council understands that the local authority has an important role to play in helping protect Merton's residents and businesses against crime and anti-social behaviour, and notes that:

- Several councils, such as Hammersmith and Fulham, have entered into successful arrangements with their local police to fund extra bobbies on the beat;
- Section 92 of the Police Act 1996 allows local authorities to make grants for police purposes to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime which would be used to buy in police inspectors, sergeants and constables on a 2 year contract at a reduced 'buy one get one free' rate as part of a cost sharing agreement;
- Were Merton to enter into such an agreement for 2014-15 as part of the new MetPatrol Plus 'buy one get one free' scheme, it has recently been confirmed by the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime that the annual cost of buying in a police constable with full powers of arrest would be reduced from £58,000 to £29,000, with MOPAC picking up the shortfall.

This Council believes that a dedicated Safer Town Centre patrol unit is needed for Wimbledon in order to reduce levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the town centre, potentially also thereby freeing up other officers for duties elsewhere in the borough. This Council supports the use of a cost sharing agreement with MOPAC to part fund this new policing unit, which – following discussions with local police representatives - would most likely comprise a sergeant and 6 police constables with full powers of arrest, and therefore calls on Cabinet to enter into the necessary negotiations with MOPAC with immediate effect and to make the relevant financial provision as part of the ongoing 2014-15 budget setting process.

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