

Borough Commander Questions

<p>Cllr Peter Southgate</p>	<p>Merton's most recent biennial residents' survey (sample 1005, fieldwork April/May 2021) shows a significant fall in the number who feel safe going out after dark compared with the 2019 survey - 63% in 2021, down 21% from 84% in 2019.</p> <p>From a policing perspective we are conscious that people want to see visible policing in open spaces and also in areas where they feel unsafe. We know that, although crime figures are relatively low, it is the perception of crime that can be just as impactful. We have been encouraging people to record their feelings on the Home Office StreetSafe tool so we can work with partners to address the areas where there is concern.</p>
<p>Cllr Peter Southgate</p>	<p>The Sarah Everard murder is clearly the principal factor (women are twice as likely as men to feel unsafe after dark), but what other factors may have contributed to the increase in perceptions that it is unsafe to go out after dark? What measures can the police take to counter these perceptions, especially amongst women?</p> <p>I believe reporting in the media can be unhelpful as it can suggest issues are widespread when this is not borne out by statistics. Council colleagues, working with us, have good Violence Against Women and Girl plans that we have been publicising. We are also involved in other initiatives such as walk and run and talk where we are coming together with community members to discuss concerns.</p>
<p>Cllr Peter Southgate</p>	<p>The number of residents who perceive crime as a very/ fairly big problem in their local area has increased significantly between the two surveys for four categories of crime:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vehicle crime 40%, up 19% • burglary 38%, up 15% • people using/ dealing drugs 31%, up 10% • ASB 30%, up 11% <p>Do these perceptions of increased crime match increases in actual changes recorded by the police over the last two years? Is the pattern of vehicle crime changing? What can be done to address these increases, whether in perceptions or reality?</p> <p>Vehicle crime Theft from motor vehicle crime has reduced in this period following a number of prevention initiatives working with Neighbourhood Watch in addition to targeting known offenders. Unfortunately criminals adapt and we have seen a change in the pattern of vehicle crime in this period with a significant increase in catalytic converter thefts and with the price of metal increasing this crime continues to be lucrative to criminals. We recently carried out a week of action targeting catalytic converter thefts led by our dedicated team. This included identifying and targeting offenders,</p>

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	<p>engagement activity speaking to car owners most likely to be targeted and at hotspots and working in partnership with local garages to provide marking kits free of charge.</p> <p>Burglary Burglary was higher in 2021 compared with 2020 – although the rise is small and the trend is downwards - however it is difficult to make comparisons due Covid when more people were at home which had a preventative effect.</p> <p>Drugs Reported drugs offences were significantly lower in 2021 compared with 2020. Where particular areas are identified for repeated drug use the neighbourhood teams attend with Safer Merton and design out crime officers to see if changes can be made to prevent this happening.</p> <p>ASB We saw an increased reporting of ASB throughout the Covid period, particularly linked to neighbour disputes. The trend is now downwards.</p> <p>In short, little correlation between crime figures and perception. People spending more time in their home area may have changed perception.</p>
Cllr Peter McCabe	<p>The number of officers in Ravensbury Ward now <u>versus</u> the number in 2010? Including Police Officers, PCSO's and Safer Neighbourhood Teams/Patrols</p> <p>We do not have the figure for 2010.</p> <p>The staffing now is 2 PCs and 1 PCSO which we believe will be lower than in 2010.</p>
Conservative Group	<p>Violence against the person is on the increase in Merton what plans have you to contain or reduce this?</p> <p>In 2021 Violence against the person offences were up by less than 1% compared to 2020 – this was largely due to lockdown being released.</p> <p>We have seen a spike in weapon enabled crime in October 2021 due to a series of school age robberies. To tackle this Operation Decent, a BCU wide initiative led by the Youth Integrated Offender Management team including ward officers with local knowledge of the offenders, regularly deploy to Merton and this has been effective at disrupting this activity. The Violence Suppression Unit and Neighbourhood Tasking Team also carry out patrols at keys times and locations.</p>

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<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>When will action be taken to free Wimbledon Bridge from delivery motorcycles and their riders who on a daily basis flout the law in terms of parking?</p> <p>We are aware of the concerns around the high numbers of delivery drivers on mopeds parking in the parking bays on the bridge which prevents other road users from using these drop of bays. The Safer Neighbourhood Team are part of a multi-agency Task and Finish group (which includes Merton Council and Love Wimbledon) working on this issue. We are aware that following a meeting hosted by Stephen Hammond MP with Merton Council and delivery bike companies in Dec 2021 a way forward has been agreed which involves Merton Council making available alternative parking provision in Hartfield Road car park and St George's Road Car parks; and that Future Merton is in communication with the main delivery companies around this and about how the delivery companies can provide guidance to their drivers encouraging the use of the alternative parking provision to reduce volume of bikes on the bridge.</p> <p>We understand that the Council is planning to install advisory signage which should include details re alternative parking provision and that once this signage goes up a series of joint patrols will be arranged with the Councils parking officers and the Safer Neighbourhood Team.</p>
<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>When/How will you reorganise local safer neighbourhood teams and safer neighbourhood panels given the council boundary changes?</p> <p>These issues are still the subject of discussion. The ward teams will be aligned to the new ward boundaries in terms of officer resource, for Merton this does not require an uplift, simply a reallocation of staff. We are also encouraging officers and ward panel chairs to talk about current ward panel structures and what changes are needed.</p>
<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>Theft of bicycles, and theft of catalytic converters still appear high up on crime stats, what progress are you making in tackling the organised criminal gangs doing these?</p> <p>We recently carried out a week of action targeting catalytic converter thefts led by our dedicated team. This included identifying and targeting offenders, engagement activity speaking to car owners most likely to be targeted and at hotspots and working in partnership with local garages to provide marking kits free of charge. We also regularly carry out free bike marking events in partnership with Safer Merton across the borough which are well advertised and well attended.</p>

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<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>Can you confirm that Wimbledon Police Station will stay open regardless of whom the next Met Commissioner will be?</p> <p>The estate budget and plan is owned by MOPAC. We are yet to hear from MOPAC on which stations we are able to retain. The Met has asked to retain Wimbledon Police Station.</p>
<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>Have the Police identified particular locations where women feel unsafe in the borough (at night especially), and have you made any recommendations to relevant partners for improvements as a result?</p> <p>We are in the process of examining data received via the Street Safe app. Once this has been collated we will work with partners to work together for improvements where any particular locations are identified.</p>
<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>Many posts on NextDoor about people acting suspiciously around cars and in gardens, in the small hours. To what extent does this "citizen reporting" feed fear of crime and what more can be done to reduce fear of crime and crime itself?</p> <p>There is often, but not always, misinformation on Nextdoor and social media. Where we see it we will issue statements containing the facts. Nextdoor is problematic as comments are often in closed groups. We encourage people to both report crime and to get their information from reputable sources. Ward panels, ward panel chairs, MPs, councillors and neighbourhood watches are good supports to the community and sources of reputable information also.</p>
<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>What is the Borough Police's policy on ensuring a strong level of proactive policing and visible patrols, in residential areas and do you feel that more can be done to strengthen work with the borough's Neighbourhood Watch?</p> <p>The borough benefits from regular proactive policing and high visibility patrols from both the Violence Suppression Unit and the Neighbourhood Tasking Team, in addition to Operation Decent. The borough already has excellent Neighbourhood Watch coverage and we are currently identifying which wards have less coverage and working to increase this.</p>
<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>At the September meeting of the commission, you said that you wanted the status of Wimbledon Police Station to be confirmed formally, has there been any progress on this, and has there been any new investment in the police station since September?</p> <p>We have not heard from MOPAC in relation to any of our buildings. It is in plan to do some refurbishment on Wimbledon station next year should we receive confirmation that we are able to retain it.</p>

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	<p>Investment in the station in recent months has been limited and has been based on need only.</p>
<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>Since the murder of Sarah Everard, the MET has published a new action plan for tackling violence against women and girls. At a local level can more police resources be put into parks and areas like that with poor lighting after dark and this often comes up when we talk to residents?</p> <p>We are conducting high visibility patrols in VAWG hotspots, particularly Wimbledon and Mitcham Town Centre. Neighbourhood teams work closely with the Licensing Teams and Licensed Premises to encourage them to support 'Ask Angela' initiative. We are utilising our special constables to maximise the impact of this and also coordinate with Street Pastors. We work with partners such as CCTV to make the best use of finite resources focusing on harm and risk reduction.</p>
<p>Conservative Group</p>	<p>At the previous meeting you spoke about the crimes that our BCU are solving known as the sanction detection rate which was low across the country, how has this changed since you last visited the commission in September?</p> <p>Sanction detection rates are still lower than I would want them to be – and this is the case in South West BCU, the Met and nationally. However there is a focus on improvement which continues – and rates have been increasing in important areas such as rape and hate crime. I will talk about the figures and answer questions at the meeting.</p>
<p>Cllr Paul Kohler</p>	<p>In September 2018 the previous Borough Commander confirmed that the creation of the new Basic Command Unit resulted in a 19% reduction in the police compliment across the four, previously separate, Borough Command Units (from 1376 to 1112 officers). In April 2019 she further confirmed that the actual reduction then stood at 25% as there were currently 84 vacancies across the BCU. In November 2021 it was also stated at Locations Board that the BCU had received just 30 additional officers (to be based in Kingston) from the anticipated increase of 6000 officers across London. Can the Commander consequently please confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The current planned compliment of officers and staff across the BCU? 1474 b) The current actual number of officers and staff across the BCU? 1559 c) How many of the anticipated 6000 extra police officers across the Met have now been appointed in London? <p>Around two thirds of this number.</p>

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	<p>d) Whether the BCU has been successful in obtaining any extra officers in addition to the 30 previously announced; and if so where they are to be stationed?</p> <p>We are still receiving new officers, however officers are leaving the BCU and the Met each month too.</p> <p>There are 2 PC vacancies on Merton Neighbourhoods which I expect to be filled next month.</p>
<p>Cllr Paul Kohler</p>	<p>In September 2021 the Borough Commander stated it was her understanding “that MOPAC will shortly be opening discussions to understand the strength of feeling [about the retention of Wimbledon Police Station] and other estates”. Can the Commander consequently please confirm;</p> <p>a) Whether MOPAC’s recent consultation on the Police & Crime Plan 2021-25 was the discussion to which she was referring and what relevance the following statement in paragraph 9.2 of MOPAC’s draft has for her plans concerning Wimbledon Police Station?</p> <p><i>“The Mayor will continue to support the ambition of the MPS Estate Strategy to concentrate on fewer – but better – buildings. This approach will provide revenue savings to help protect the front line and will release capital for reinvestment in technology and equipment to help modernise policing. There will continue to be one 24/7 front counter in every London borough. Neighbourhood teams will be based in buildings close to the communities they police”</i></p> <p>b) The timeline for the current consultation and the bodies, groups and MPs across Merton who have responded?</p> <p>c) Whether there have been any discussions of which she is aware, beyond the Police & Crime 2021-25 consultation, relevant to the future of Wimbledon Police Station?</p> <p>d) Any further information she can share concerning the future of Wimbledon Police Station?</p> <p>I am not able to answer most of these questions which are for MOPAC. I have not received any further information from MOPAC about Wimbledon police station. I have not been contacted or consulted with save that I am aware some data has been collected on footfall in Mitcham and Wimbledon Police Stations in October 2021 which was sent to MOPAC. I am happy to talk about these figures.</p>
<p>Cllr Paul Kohler</p>	<p>Can the Borough Commander please report on progress across the BCU to implement MOPAC’s plans (detailed in their 2017 <i>Public Access & Engagement Strategy</i>) to;</p>

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	<p>a) Improve the Met’s online provision in respect of both the reporting and handling of crime? b) Create DWO hubs within 20 minutes walk of each ward? c) Provide tablets and the associated software to enable officers to work remotely without the need for regular access to a police station?</p> <p>In relation to a) additional fields have been added to the on-line reporting form and the Met Contact Centre now accepts direct message reports on Twitter. b) We await information from MOPAC, however it is my understanding the 20 minutes criteria may now include 20 minutes by bicycle. c) The vast majority of officers have a tablet or laptop and can work from within the community/on the street as needed.</p>
<p>Cllr Paul Kohler</p>	<p>Can the Borough Commander give an update on the police’s current view on the advisability of the council installing lighting to the paths across Wandle Park?</p> <p>In response to concerns raised by residents the Police have been working with the Council, to conduct a review of crime prevention and safety measures in and around Wandle Park. The review is looking into how to design out crime in the park and is being supported by the Met’s Designing out Crime Team. As with most designing out crime reviews the assessment will consider a wide range of options including measures such as lighting and CCTV.</p> <p>When designing out crime the applicability of particular measures is dependent on the specific circumstances of the location in question. We understand that the work on the Wandle park review is still ongoing so would not wish to pre-empt its conclusion as to which particular measures it will be recommending to be implemented.</p>
<p>Cllr Paul Kohler</p>	<p>Can the Borough Commander confirm, as reported at the Trinity Ward Police Panel, that the BCU is currently unable to align neighbourhood police teams with Merton’s new ward boundaries? If this is correct, can the Commander please explain:</p> <p>a) Why we were told the matter was in hand and the change would not be problematic when I raised this issue at Locations Board last year? b) How it is proposed ward panels will function after May? c) What implications this has for her aim to improve community policing?</p> <p>These issues are still the subject of discussion. In broad terms, we will now be moving to align teams to the new ward boundaries in terms of officer resource – however as these neighbourhood officers will need to come from the numbers of officers we have already we will need to determine when these moves can take</p>

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	<p>place and how many officers we are able to allocate at this time to each ward – for example 1 or 2 dedicated ward officers initially. We are also encouraging officers and ward panel chairs to talk about current ward panel structures and what changes are needed.</p>
Cllr Paul Kohler	<p>Can the Borough Commander give an update on the success of her decision to put more police resources in and around schools?</p> <p>All the positions for schools officers have been filled. There is one sergeant, nine safer schools PCs, one youth engagement officer and one volunteer police cadet coordinator.</p>
Cllr Paul Kohler	<p>Is the Borough Commander now in a position to provide further detail on the number of positive outcomes for different stop and search categories?</p> <p>As mentioned at the previous meeting, this data is publicly available at the borough level on the stop and search dashboard via the Met Police website. Some information is included in the data pack.</p>
Cllr Paul Kohler	<p>Can we have an update on progress and strategy given the concerns the Borough Commander shared at the last meeting regarding the increase in calls relating to mental health issues and the comparatively high rate of offences involving violence against women?</p> <p>Mental health issues continue to affect the community and we work with partners – who have primacy on these issues – to help as far as possible e.g. sharing communications about talking and patrolling risk locations. We have a dedicated mental health officer who also advises our officers and mental health practitioners join us on some shifts.</p> <p>With regard to violence against women – these figures are captured in crime types like domestic abuse and rape which are shown in the data pack. These figures are fairly static, but we are not complacent and are aware there is under-reporting in this area.</p>