

**Borough Commander Questions – Scrutiny Committee - 7 September 2022**

	Question	Response from Borough Commander
1	<p><b>Conservative Group</b></p> <p><b>Breaking and entering in order to steal car keys is increasingly common in Merton, what steps have been taken to stop this form of crime and have the police identified this to any known criminal gangs?</b></p>	<p>We don't target burglaries of specific items at residential houses, we treat burglary the same so we do not think of those that break in to steal car keys as less or more important than other theft burglaries. Dependant on the decisions made at Ward Panel meetings by the public, burglary can be chosen as one of the local priorities and would therefore get more resources used towards tackling the issue as it is our one of the priority targets. Officers will always give out prevention advice even if the ward they are on does not have burglary as a priority to make sure that residents are as informed as they can be. Over the past couple of months we have tried different things to reduce burglary crime in the area and have had some success with a reduction in these offences. Compared to our 3 year average, burglary offence in Merton have been reduced by 21% over the past 2 months so we will aim to replicate elements of activity that have worked well. These offences have not been attributed to any specific criminal gang however, within our Police systems, we have specific individuals that are known to us – and are proactively monitored - due to their offending history and we monitor arrests that take place to identify trends/patterns that suggest they are actively offending. Otherwise, we are making the most of our partners' resources/skills and working alongside CCTV operators and colleagues from around the MPS to identify offenders and what we can do to prevent more offences.</p>
2	<p><b>Conservative Group</b></p> <p><b>What action is being taken to stop the theft of catalytic converters as this is a common form of theft in Merton?</b></p>	<p>There is information on the MPS website on catalytic converter theft and how to prevent/report it (link below).</p> <p><a href="https://www.met.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/keeping-vehicles-safe/catalytic-converter-theft/">https://www.met.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/keeping-vehicles-safe/catalytic-converter-theft/</a></p> <p>I've included a leaflet with this document on what we are doing locally in Merton to combat this crime.</p>

<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Conservative Group</b></p> <p><b>The theft of keyless vehicles is rising in Merton, what action can the MET take to stop this?</b></p>	<p>Theft of keyless vehicles has become a problem across the MPS and the UK. In order to combat the issue, officers provide the public with prevention advice for car owners that have keyless car entry which includes putting the keys somewhere safe within your house, not having them where they are visible to those outside of your home (next to windows etc). Criminals committing these crimes often try to obtain the keys' signal from outside of the home, so the further away the keys are from the exterior walls, the better. You can also use some metal boxes/tins that you may find around your home to store the keys in to prevent the signal being obtained. Additionally, signal-blocking pouches which are metal lined wallets can be used. These can be bought online for a relatively low price Anything else you can do to make the car harder to steal will be a deterrent. Putting the car in a garage, getting a lockable post on your driveway and in-car security devices such as steering wheel locks can also help. If you have a high-value car, consideration to getting a tracking device fitted should also be made. However, if despite prevention advice, someone is unfortunate enough to fall victim to this type of crime, when the report is made to police, it will be investigated by the relevant team who will complete any enquiries, giving us the best chance at locating the vehicle and arresting the criminals. We are also working with car manufacturers to design-out this crime and our specialist crime teams are targeting gangs who may be involved in this activity.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Conservative Group</b></p> <p><b>Moving traffic offences continually annoy residents in wards such as Hillside, especially heavy lorries squeezing down narrow residential roads (e.g. Woodside), what action will you take to a) Enforce the weight restrictions? b) Enforce the speed limits?</b></p>	<p>a) Enforcing weight restrictions is not something that we can do locally on neighbourhood teams as we do not have the required training or equipment which is carried by safer transport and traffic teams. Weight restrictions are only deemed necessary when there may be a risk of the road/ground being unsafe if driven on by vehicles of/over a certain weight. These restrictions cannot be used as a way to prevent vehicles driving down narrow roads, width restrictions would be more suitable in these circumstances. More information would have to be gathered before width restrictions could be considered as this would be a council decision/implementation and would require specific reasons to implement.</p>

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		<p>Are cars being damaged by heavy/wide Lorries travelling down these roads or are there blind spots/layout issues on the road whereby these specific vehicles are creating danger to pedestrians that cars alone would not.</p> <p>b) When the Ward teams are contacted by local residents or are made aware that there is a specific problem in certain areas with vehicles speeding, we have multiple options available to us. Firstly, setting up speed watches with officers to alert drivers in the area that we are monitoring vehicles speeding and to act as a deterrent. Also, we are always keen to set up Community Speed watches with residents who would like to volunteer in support us carrying out this work to allow them to see what we do and contribute to the work we put in place targeting speeding. If these options do not have the desired impact, we can then also consider other measures such as working with the council to see the tools they have at their disposal (speed cameras, width restrictions, clearer signage etc).</p>
5	<p><b>Conservative Group</b></p> <p><b>Will you commit to doing a couple of town hall style meetings with local councillors and MPs to reassure the public?</b></p>	<p>Yes I am very happy to do this, alongside my neighbourhood team.</p>
6	<p><b>Liberal Democrat group</b></p> <p><b>What % of Officers in the BCU have received the accredited domestic abuse training recommended by the College of Policing as detailed in this article?</b></p> <p><a href="#">Millions living in areas where police not trained in handling domestic violence   Domestic violence   The Guardian</a></p>	<p>85% of officers in the SW BCU on the training list have currently received this training.</p> <p>Long-term sickness and covid-related absence is typically the reason the other officers are yet to be trained.</p> <p>The MPS average number trained for BCU is 80%.</p>
7	<p><b>Liberal Democrat group</b></p> <p><b>Does the BCU currently have a strategy to enforce speed and weight limits on residential and/or distributor roads across Merton?</b></p>	<p>SW BCU do not have a specific/all-encompassing plan in place to enforce speeding or weight limit restrictions.</p> <p>With regard to speeding, I have mentioned above the type of things we consider and put in place to target</p>

		<p>issues when we become aware of them to ensure residents and road users are as safe as possible. But this is very much a fluid approach as the reason speeding offences are taking place varies. Sometimes it can be a lack of clear signage on the roads to people in fast cars just deciding to drive fast because they think they can. For this reason, it is important we adapt our approach on a case by case basis in each area switching from education to enforcement depending on what is deemed most appropriate at the time.</p> <p>In terms of weight restrictions, this is something that doesn't often get brought to our attention but can be addressed if it is. Due to the risk posed by vehicles breaching weight restrictions at the specified locations (roads/bridges etc), if we are made aware of specific locations where vehicles are continuously ignoring these restrictions, there can be a joint approach between the relevant teams to ensure compliance.</p>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Liberal Democrat group</b></p> <p><b>What is being done to deter organised theft of catalytic converters, motor bikes, cycles and private vehicles and is there, as residents perceive, an increase in this type of crime in Merton?</b></p>	<p>Catalytic Converter Thefts: This is answered in the question 2 above.</p> <p>Bicycle Theft: Including 2021 and 2022, we are below our 5 year average for these offences in most months, so this is a perception which is not borne out by the figures. However, our teams will keep doing work to provide preventative advice and also deterrents to ensure this crime is kept to a minimum and does not begin to increase.</p> <p>Vehicle Theft: For vehicle theft, in the last month we were 30% above our 5 year average. But it's difficult to interpret this data properly as it will include the 12-18 months during COVID restrictions which would have seen a significant reduction in this crime as people were often not leaving their homes and so the data is slightly misleading. Even so, the number of offences that are taking place shows there is a need for us to address these issues and although we often locate the offenders after they have committed these crimes, it is important we continue to work with our partners to put preventative measures in place (CCTV, crime prevention advice, adequate street lighting) to drive down these crimes.</p>

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<p>9</p>	<p><b>Liberal Democrat group</b></p> <p><b>What are the current response times in Merton (or if this is not known across the BCU) for the following three categories of call and how do these figures relate to target and average figures across the Metropolitan Police District?</b></p>	<p><b>Figures based on the average total over the past year:</b>  <b>CM: Calls made</b>  <b>AW: Attended within Target Time (I = 15 minutes, S = 60 minutes, E = 24 hours)</b></p> <p>I – Immediate (High urgency)  <b>Merton – CM: 6899 calls – AW: 5474 (80%)</b>  <b>SW BCU – CM: 30,628 – AW: 24,456 (80%)</b>  <b>MPS – CM: 389,823 – AW: 314,507 (81%)</b></p> <p>S – Significant (Low urgency)  <b>Merton – CM: 7725 – AW: 4329 (56%)</b>  <b>SW BCU – CM: 33,704 – AW: 20,672 (61%)</b>  <b>MPS – CM: 430,473 – AW: 264,285 (61%)</b></p> <p>E – Extended (Non-urgent) call  <b>Unable to get figures for E Grade calls at present</b>          These are not regularly monitored in the BCU or beyond due to the number of ways they are resolved e.g. moved to a report on line, responded to by phone, no longer needed etc.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p><b>Liberal Democrat group</b></p> <p><b>Is the Borough Commander aware of the council’s work on VAWG and is there any evidence of the impact this is having on crime against women and girls?</b></p>	<p>Yes I am aware of the councils work on VAWG. It is difficult to make a causal link between local council and police activity in relation to VAWG matters. Numerous issues influence the crimes committed, such as the weather and environmental changes as well as context e.g. what has been in the news.</p> <p>We believe VAWG is underreported and trust from victims is a challenge – however we do know there has been increased oversight and interest in VAWG which has both increased reports and increased preventative activity.</p> <p>Examples of current activity include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merton VAWG strategy completed in April 2022 – Police an integral part of this. E.g. intelligence and data driven hot spot patrolling.</li> <li>• South West four LA boroughs - led by Kingston’s VAWG lead - including Merton have secured 180K of funding to spend on VAWG activity. This includes evaluation and monitoring and</li> </ul>

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		<p>identifying what activity has the most impact – we will know more in 6 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merton developing training in Trauma Informed Practice, supporting police officer dealing with DA to understand how they can better support victims – evidence suggests that victims have concerns about not being believed. There will an evaluation of this and best practice / lunch and learns / identified.</li> <li>• Walk and talks / ask for Angela with license premises.</li> </ul> <p>VAWG offences – last 12 months in Merton reduction of 4.4% (n171 offences) this is the fourth lowest in the MPS.</p> <p>VAWG Offence - Detection rate 7.2% (increase of 1.2%) this financial year – still not enough!</p> <p>Concern is an increase is violence against the person – 10% increase this FYtD.</p>
11	<p><b>Liberal Democrat group</b></p> <p><b>Does the BCU have a restorative justice strategy and to what extent does the BCU utilise restorative justice in its approach to combatting crime?</b></p>	<p>The MPS follows the guidance set out by the Restorative Justice Council. The BCU does not have a stand-alone strategy but a Detective Chief Inspector, new to the BCU, who was a contact for restorative justice for the MPS, will be writing one. Currently the process is underused and I would be interested in changing this or at least making sure that the principles and the availability of restorative justice as an option is understood.</p>
12	<p><b>Liberal Democrat group</b></p> <p><b>Are police officers given any advice on how to interact with members of the public when out on patrol apart from those they specifically encounter when going about their duties? Is it for example, suggested officers routinely greet members of the public they pass in the street?</b></p>	<p>Yes this is suggested - we often use the language of “engaging” with people. However we also hope that people - community and police - will just talk to each other. We are aware that there is sometimes feedback about officers not doing this - perhaps talking to each other and/or not looking up whilst in cars. We do give this feedback to officers. The MPS is focussing a lot more on what engagement means and looks like now than historically - starting in training when we talk to new officers and staff about</p>

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		the history of London’s communities and the value of building trust and relationships.
<b>13</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat group</b>  <b>What is the current status of Merton’s Independent Advisory Group and are there lessons to be learned as to how Merton’s IAG performs in contrast with other London borough IAGs in improving public confidence in the police?</b>	Merton’s Independent Advisory Group (IAG) remains in place and is well chaired by Father David Pennells. As with other IAGs across London it is sometimes hard to ensure that all parts of the community are represented and we would always welcome new members and have done adverts to promote this. I attend the vast majority of IAG meetings. The Chairs of each borough’s IAG meet together regularly to share best practice. I would welcome ideas on how to improve further - one idea perhaps could be promoting the IAG on a more consistent basis and again at critical points of low trust.
<b>14</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat group</b>  <b>Is the Borough Commander aware of any developments since her last update on the long-term future of Wimbledon Police Station?</b>	Unfortunately I have no further news on this matter and await a decision from MOPAC.

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