

## **Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Wards: All

## **Subject: Safer Merton – Anti-Social Behaviour Update**

Lead Officer: Calvin McLean, Interim Assistant Director, Public Protection

Lead member: Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Contact officer: Megan Hatton, Head of Community Safety, Katy Saunders, Community Safety Team Manager, Anthony Cole, ASB Team Manager

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### **Recommendations:**

A. *That the Committee note and support the work undertaken to tackle anti-social behaviour in Merton.*

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report provides the Committee with an update of ASB patterns and trends, and knife crime, in Merton and the steps being taken to address these.
- 1.2. Addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB) and tackling knife crime are strategic priorities of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) as they remain a concern for residents and can impact greatly upon our communities' quality of life, as well as potentially leading to more harmful criminal behaviour.
- 1.3. Community Safety Partnerships are a requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The partnership is made up of representatives from the police, local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, health services, and probation services (known as the 'responsible authorities'). The partnership is responsible for setting and overseeing the strategic direction for community safety and the community cohesion agenda in the borough, and to fulfil the statutory requirements of the CSP in Merton.
- 1.4. The legal definition of ASB according to the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014<sup>1</sup> is '*conduct that has caused or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to any person.*'
- 1.5. The Safer Merton ASB team consists of three ASB Officers who each cover a geographical patch of the borough, overseen by an ASB Team Manager.
- 1.6. The team focuses on coordinating a multi-agency response to ASB issues. This is via a targeted neighbourhood problem solving approach, using enforcement tools and powers, and delivering interventions to support the most vulnerable victims and locations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/contents/enacted>

- 1.7. Knife crime is any crime involving a knife or sharp object. This includes carrying a knife, owning a banned knife, trying to buy a knife if you are under 18, and/or threatening, injuring or fatally wounding someone with a knife.
- 1.8. An offensive weapon is defined as any item that has been made or adapted for the intention to cause hurt or harm to another person, under the Offences Weapon Act 2019.
- 1.9. Safer Merton have a Violence and Vulnerability Strategic Development Lead and a Serious Violence Strategic Lead, who work closely with partners to oversee the strategic and operational response to violence including knife crime. This includes leading on the Serious Violence Duty and Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan and overseeing external grant funding towards initiatives used to tackle violence and support those impacted.
- 1.10. The work done by Safer Merton and our partners to deliver a safer borough contributes to the fact we are currently 4<sup>th</sup> safest borough in London<sup>2</sup> (*based upon the rate per 1,000 per population for total notifiable offences*).
- 1.11. The main sections of this report are as follows:
- 1.12. ***Voice of the residents*** – a summary of feedback received from the residents of Merton about the ASB issues which concern them the most.
- 1.13. Whilst the biannual Community Safety Survey is still open for consultation until the 7 September, the most recent LBM Annual Resident Survey (2021) results showed that 91% of residents felt safe in their local area during the day and 84% at night.
- 1.14. The last Community Safety Survey (2021) identified graffiti and vandalism as being the top type of ASB concerns, with residents also expressing concerns about street drinking and the presence of drug paraphernalia (cannisters). Whilst Merton ranks as the 4<sup>th</sup> safest borough in London, there are differences highlighted between different areas of the borough, with people feeling less safe in the east of the borough. Crime and gangs were also raised as concerns by young people.
- 1.15. ***ASB and knife crime data*** – an overview of trends and patterns in the reported ASB and knife crime data.
- 1.16. Data shows the volume of calls of ASB complaints received by Safer Merton between July 2022 – June 2023 increased during the summer holidays and peaked in August and there was a secondary surge around Halloween/ fireworks season. This is a typical pattern we see with there being seasonal increases which is not unique to Merton.
- 1.17. The wards with the highest volume of reports were Cannon Hill, Lower Morden, and Cricket Green, with most of the complaints being neighbour disputes, and noise complaints.
- 1.18. Post the pandemic and the easing of any restrictions in March 2022, levels of ASB calls to police have reduced. Overall crime levels during 2023 have been slightly higher than the previous 12 months: There were 13,952 Total Notifiable Offences (TNOs) recorded by the Police in Merton in the 12 months to June 2023. This is 2.3% (313 offences) higher than the 12 months

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<sup>2</sup> As of July 2023

to June 2022. The three wards with the highest levels of ASB calls during 2022-23 were Cricket Green, Lavender Fields, and Wimbledon Town and Dundonald which was created by the changes in ward boundaries in May 2022.

- 1.19. In the 12 months to June 2023 there were 264 offences flagged as knife enabled showing an increase of 14.8% (34 offences) on the previous 12 months. This compares to an increase of 20.3% across the Met as a whole. Robbery (65%) and Violence Against the Person (33%) were the main types of offence and the top three wards were Cricket Green (36), Pollards Hill (29) and Figges Marsh (28), collectively 35% of all knife offences.
- 1.20. The Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan captures the effort made by partners to support the reduction and prevention of violence in Merton and using the data and trends feeds into the partnership response to ensure that we are targeting resources and delivery accordingly.
- 1.21. ***What have we been doing*** – an overview of the work being undertaken in connection with Merton’s Community Safety Partnership to tackle ASB and violence.
- 1.22. To ensure a holistic response to addressing crime and ASB, a range of multi-agency work is taking place to continue to monitor, respond and enforce regarding ASB and crime related matters. This includes several partnership meetings that discuss these issues, hot spot locations and how jointly these can be tackled including providing support and intervention to those in need, installing additional CCTV cameras and using enforcement when appropriate.
- 1.23. We conduct Days of Enhanced Visibility to address specific concerns and provide community engagement and reassurance. These days involve working in partnership to meet residents, visit businesses, offer advice, and carry out enforcement activities. We work closely with Youth outreach and Children Social Care to ensure safeguarding matters are addressed and a contextual safeguarding approach is taken and have commissioned services that provide dedicated provisions to young people and schools to address young violence and exploitation.
- 1.24. Data and trends from partners, police and resident’s survey is used to help direct the strategic and operational plan to the issues and allows the partnership to take a targeted and hyper local approach where needed.
- 1.25. The overall approach aims to ensure that there is a sufficient multi-agency focus of resources and interventions towards the locations suffering from the highest levels of persistent ASB and crime, and towards the individual cases causing the greatest risk of harm towards individual victims.

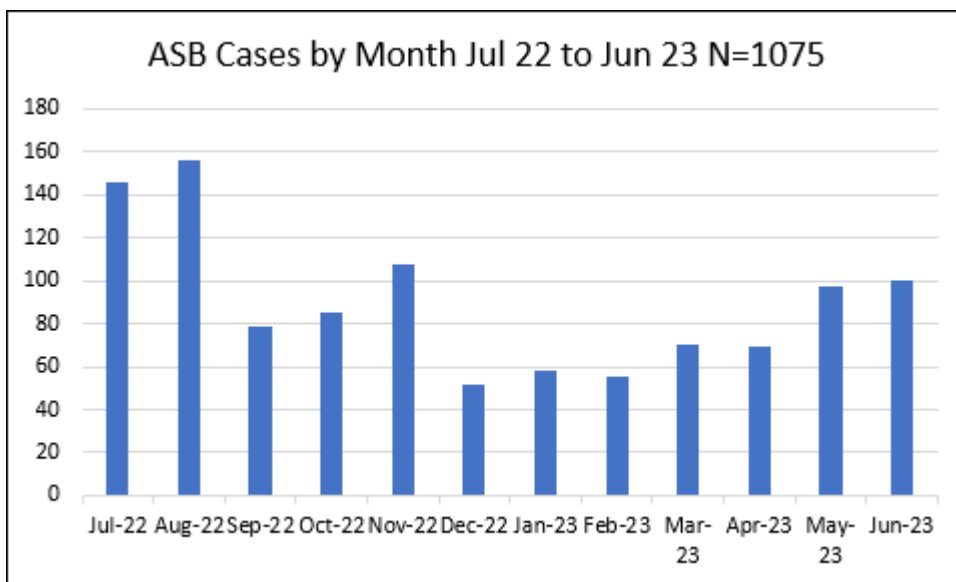
## **2 THE VOICE OF THE RESIDENTS**

- 2.1. The **Community Safety Survey** is carried out biannually. The current consultation is open between 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2023 and 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023, therefore the information in this report relates to the last consultation which took place during 2021.

- 2.2. In addition to considering the results from the Community Safety Survey (CSS) the section below also considers results from other consultations such as Merton Council's **Annual Residents Survey** (ARS – last conducted in 2021) which have relevance to the topics of ASB and community safety.
- 2.3. For the evidence base upon which the summary is based please see *Appendices - Public Consultation Results*.
- 2.4. **Summary of survey and consultation results**
- 2.5. Encouragingly, most residents feel safe in their local areas (91% of ARS respondents reported feeling safe during the day and 84% at night). However, there has been some decline since the surveys undertaken in 2019. Both the CSS and ARS highlight the differences in perceptions between wards in the borough.
- 2.6. In relation to the types of ASB: In the CSS, graffiti (42% of respondents expressing concern) and vandalism (42%) were the top types of ASB concerns. Residents also expressed concerns about alcohol related ASB (38%), street drinking (37%) and the presence of drug paraphernalia (canisters) (39%) and drug use (38%).
- 2.7. The **Your Merton** survey (conducted 2021) highlighted the impact of ASB on local communities and the associated links with alcohol. Safety in parks was also highlighted as an issue in the Your Merton Survey and the CSS.
- 2.8. The ARS highlighted that people felt less safe in the east of the borough. In particular, the ARS highlighted that ASB related issues, as well as drug dealing and groups hanging around, were perceived as a problem.
- 2.9. According to the ARS residents living in east Merton, Mitcham, south Mitcham, and Morden areas had the highest percentage of residents who saw ASB and people using and dealing drugs as a problem. Residents in the east Merton and Mitcham areas also saw being drunk or rowdy as a problem.
- 2.10. Crime and gangs were also raised as problems by young people in the Young People ARS.
- 2.11. **PSPO Consultation**
- 2.12. To determine if the alcohol related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) should be extended borough wide, Safer Merton conducted a public consultation in December 2022, a summary of findings is below:
- 2.13. *- 47% of respondents felt that street drinking was a fairly or very big problem. 75% felt litter was a problem.*
- 2.14. *- 76% of respondents had witnessed ASB related to street drinking in Merton in the last year. 18% had witnessed ASB related to street drinking more than 10 times in the last year.*
- 2.15. *- Respondents felt less safe in Merton at night.*
- 2.16. *- Many respondents said that alcohol related ASB affected their quality of life.*

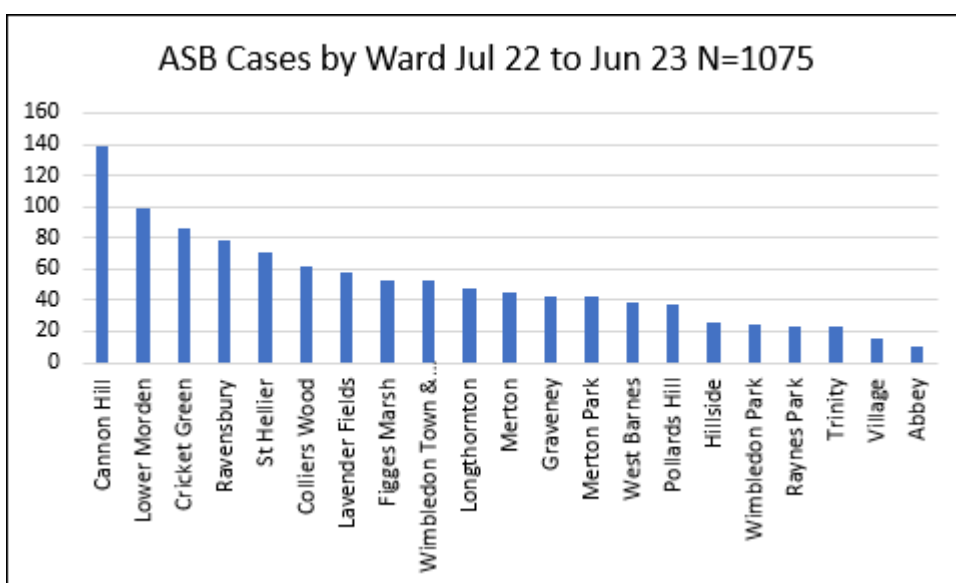
### 3 ASB DATA

- 3.1. The section below focuses on what the data shows about ASB trends and patterns in Merton.
- 3.2. The Safer Merton ASB Team record cases reported to them via emails and phone calls from residents, businesses, and Members.
- 3.3. *Reports to London Borough of Merton ASB Team*

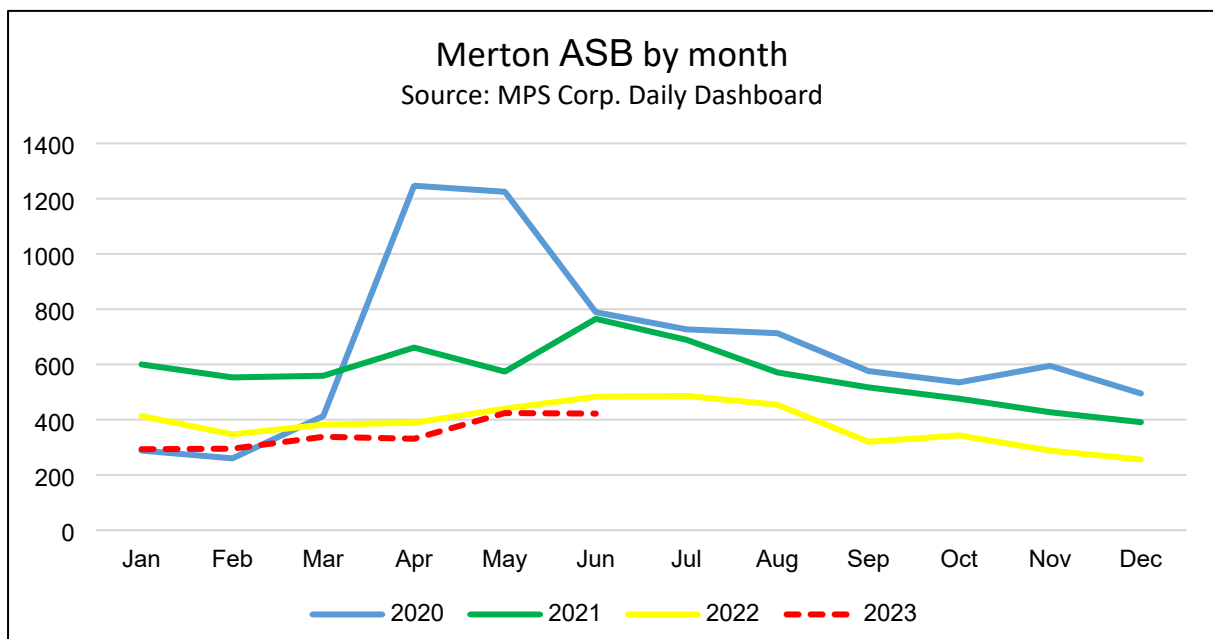


- 3.4. The chart above shows the volume of ASB complaints received by Safer Merton between July 2022 – June 2023. Calls increased during the summer holidays and peaked in August. There was a secondary surge around Halloween/ fireworks season. Reports of ASB and crime tend to increase during seasonal periods such as the summer and autumn months.

- 3.5. *Reports by ward to London Borough of Merton ASB Team*



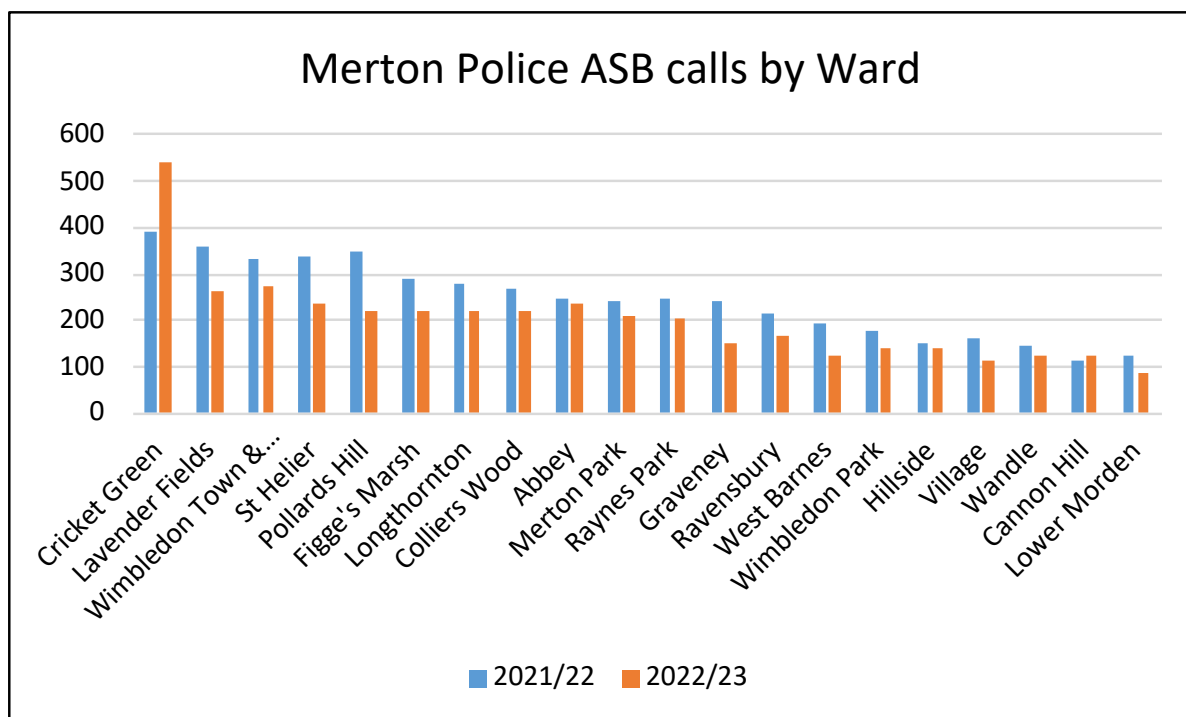
- 3.6. The wards with the highest volume of reports were Cannon Hill, Lower Morden, and Cricket Green. As this is in relation to Safer Merton ASB cases, the data will have been taken from the case management system which has only recently been updated to reflect the new wards going forward, so as the data is for 12 months, this is why it is based on the old wards.
- 3.7. Many complaints are neighbour disputes and noise complaints. Rubbish/ littering is the next most populated category, followed by vandalism/ graffiti and vehicle nuisance.
- 3.8. It's important to note that some of the wards with apparently high numbers have multiple reports related to specific sites. In Cannon Hill, 51 of the 139 calls relate to an ongoing neighbour dispute in a residential road. 17 reports relate to Joseph Hood Recreation Ground and 15 to Hillcross Avenue car park. In Lower Morden, 22 calls relate to Morden Park and 15 calls to King Georges playing fields. The issues in these areas are being addressed accordingly via a partnership approach such as being discussed at the monthly partnership tasking meeting and agreeing joint actions to respond, the youth outreach team patrolling the carpark and Morden Park to provide positive diversion activities to young people and adding additional CCTV cameras.
- 3.9. **Police ASB calls**
- 3.10. Post the pandemic and the easing of any restrictions in March 2022 levels of ASB calls to police have reduced.
- 3.11. Overall crime levels during 2023 have been slightly higher than the previous 12 months: There were 13,952 Total Notifiable Offences (TNOs) recorded by the Police in Merton in the 12 months to June 2023. This is 2.3% (313 offences) higher than the 12 months to June 2022.



- 3.12. The chart above shows that during first lockdown period there was an increase in calls to Police which were classified as ASB. Many of these

additional calls were Covid regulations related. In the 12 months covered by this report, call numbers have fallen compared to the previous year and are much lower than 2021.

### 3.13. Breakdown by ward



3.14. The breakdown of MPS ASB calls by ward is shown above. The three wards with the highest levels of ASB calls during 2022-23 were Cricket Green, Lavender Fields, and Wimbledon Town and Dundonald which was created by the changes in ward boundaries in May 2022.

## 4 KNIFE CRIME DATA

4.1. In the 12 months to June 2023 there were 264 offences in Merton flagged as knife enabled. This is an increase of 14.8% (34 offences) on the previous 12 months, which is lower than the increase of 20.3% across the Met as a whole. Whilst any rate of knife crime is concerning, in relation to rate per 1000 population for the same rolling 12 month period to June 23, the rate for Merton was 1.2 which is lower than the rate of 1.6 recorded for the whole of the Metropolitan Police.<sup>3</sup>

4.2. Most knife enabled offences were Robbery (65%) and Violence Against the Person (33%). The top three wards were Cricket Green (36), Pollards Hill (29) and Figges Marsh (28), collectively 35% of all knife offences.

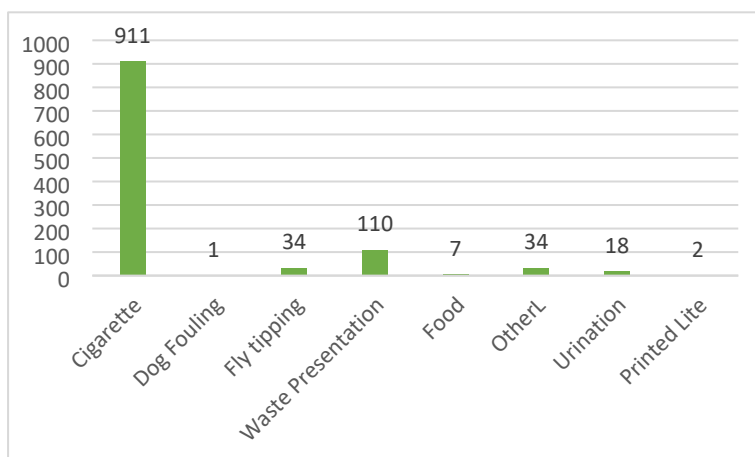
4.3. 59% of all knife crime victims were aged under 25 and three quarters of victims were male.

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/mopac-pcp-dashboard/violence-is-prevented-and-reduced-dashboard/>

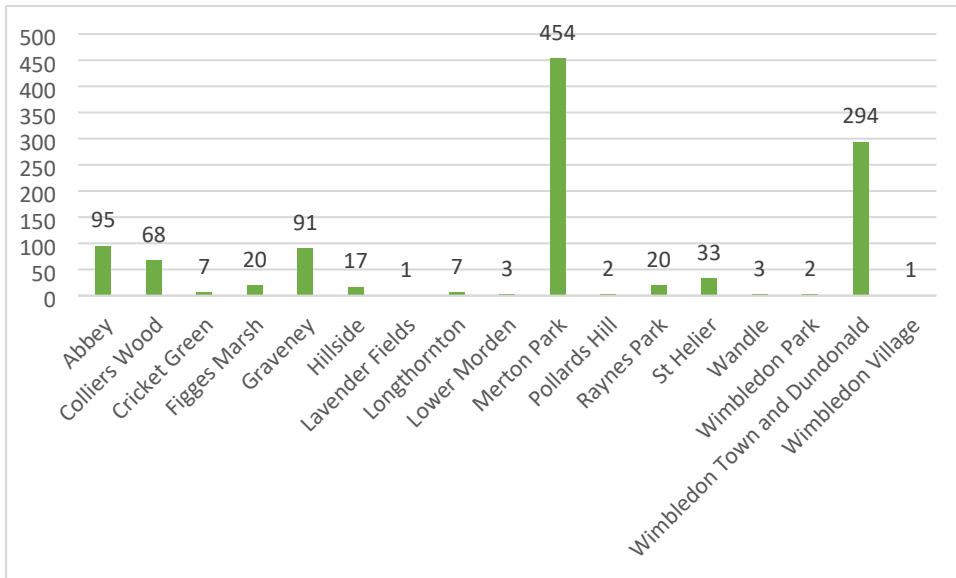
- 4.4. In terms of victim ethnicity, 39% were described as White, 21% Black and 18% Asian.
- 4.5. London Ambulance Service data for violence related incidents from the Safe stats data portal for the period July 2022 to June 2023 showed 62 records, of which 5 were knife or gunshot wound related. The top wards with the highest volume of calls were Figges Marsh (7) and Pollards Hill (6).

## 5 ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME DATA

- 5.1. Whilst environmental crime is a separate strand within the council, there are clear links between these matters and the areas of ASB dealt with in Safer Merton and the need to ensure there is a strong partnership response. A good example of this is the joint action plan for Mitcham town centre where numerous complaints are made regarding graffiti and littering alongside issues of street drinking and drug dealing. It is important that these are tackled jointly as part of a Council wide response and that we understand the concerns collectively as there can be links between environmental crime being a pathway into other forms of ASB and crime, as explained in the “broken window theory” that visible signs of disorder and misbehaviour in an environment encourage further disorder and misbehaviour, leading to serious crimes.
- 5.2. The Council’s Waste Enforcement Team lead on tackling environmental crime such as fly tipping and graffiti. Vandalism in terms of criminal damage is a criminal offence and as such dealt with by the Police.
- 5.3. Between September 2022 and July 2023, **4,605** Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were issued in relation to environmental crime. The majority are for littering and fly tipping, with a smaller amount for business non-compliance.
- 5.4. Whilst this is not the same period as above, to give an indication of where the FPNS have been issued, the below graph shows this from April 2023- June 2023 and for what reasons.
- 5.5.

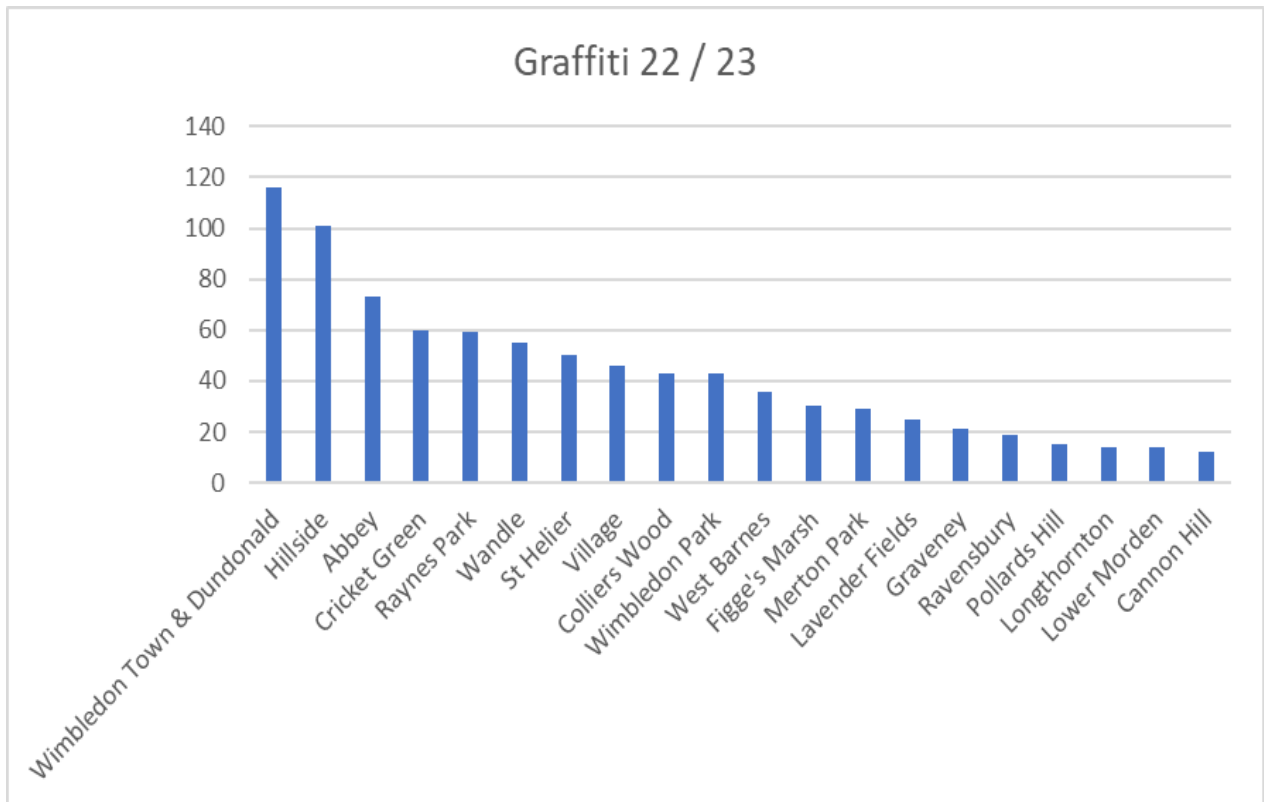




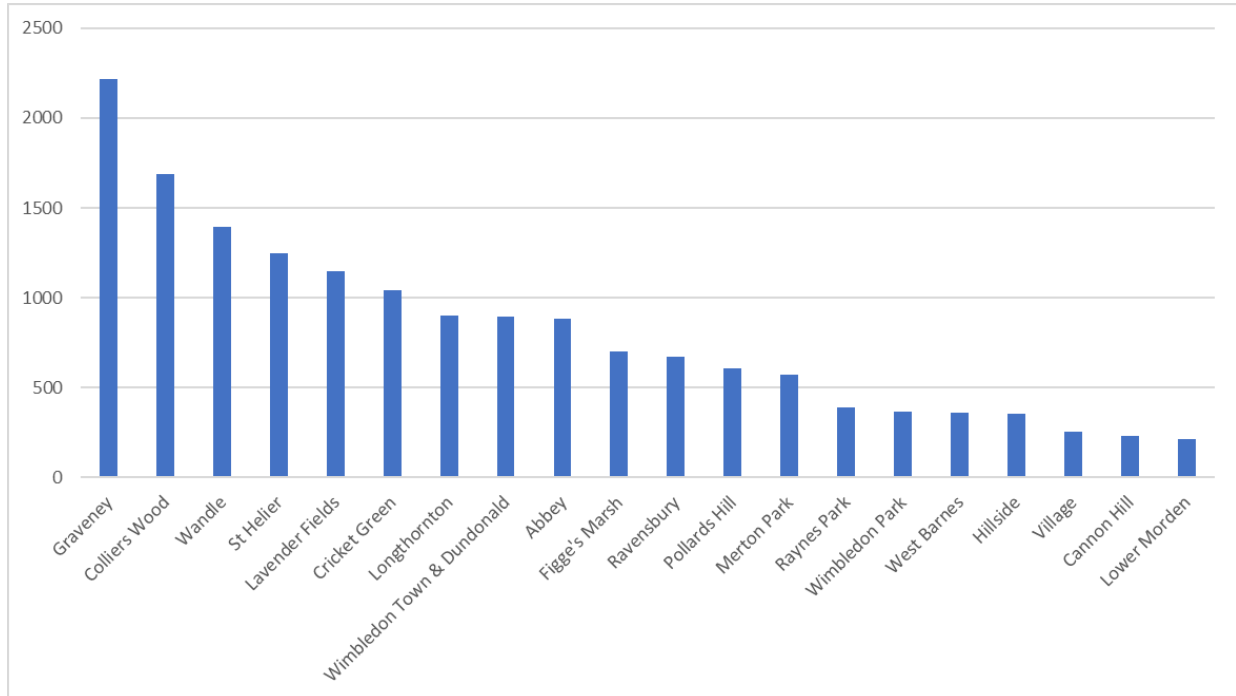


5.6.

5.7. *Reports of graffiti by ward September 2022 - July 2023*



5.8. *Reports of fly tipping by ward September 2022 – July 2023*



5.9. From September 2022 – July 2023 there were **16,120** fly tip reports received compared to 11,954 in the previous year of 2021/22. As with some of the other crime types, a few wards in the east of the borough appear to be most affected.

5.10. Graveney is the ward with the highest fly tips reported, followed by Colliers Wood. These two wards are neighboured with Wandsworth borough. Also both wards have a high number of transient residents, short term lets and HMOs – both registered and unregistered.

## 6 WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

6.1. ASB is a concern for local residents and as surveys have shown, impacts greatly upon their quality of life. As a result, it is a priority across several local strategies and plans:

- Reducing ASB is one of the Community Safety Partnership's strategic priorities.
- Tackling ASB is a local ward priority for each of the police Safer Neighbourhood Teams.
- Tackling ASB plays a key role in achieving the Council's ambition to nurture Civic Pride and *ensure residents, businesses and visitors will enjoy clean, safe, and welcoming places across the borough.*
- The implementation of a borough wide PSPO to tackle alcohol related ASB is one of the Council's corporate objectives.

### 6.2. **Tackling ASB as a Community Safety strategic priority**

6.3. The priorities set by the Community Safety Partnership for 2023-24 set out several objectives in relation to tackling ASB:

- Develop a targeted multi-agency response to locations subjected to persistent ASB.
- Continue to investigate reported cases, supporting victims and considering wider approaches to address incidents of ASB.
- Develop multi-agency processes for using the ASB tools and powers and problem solving via the Partnership Tasking Group.
- Ensure a consistent and balanced approach to engagement and enforcement of the PSPO powers going forward.
- Keep our communities and victims informed of the action taken to address ASB in their neighbourhood via quarterly Days of Visibility.
- Maintain a collaborative approach with the Police.
- Address high risk cases via the borough's Community Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (CMARAC).
- Maintain links with the borough's Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme.

### 6.4. **ASB Action Plan**

6.5. In March 2023, the Home Office published the ASB Action Plan<sup>4</sup>. The plan outlines several key areas for action, including improving the reporting and response mechanisms for ASB, increasing community involvement in

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-action-plan>

tackling ASB, and ensuring that the police and other agencies have the necessary powers and resources to effectively tackle ASB.

6.6. **Tackling Violence as a CSP priority**

6.7. **Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan**

6.8. The Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan captures the effort made by partners to support the reduction and prevention of violence in Merton.

6.9. The plan is overseen by the Mayor's London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). The purpose of the plan is to ensure that the borough has a range of up-to-date actions focused on reducing violence (including knife crime) and vulnerability. Progress on the plan in Merton is monitored via quarterly updates provided to the VRU.

6.10. VRU London Crime Prevention Fund) LCPF funding has been utilised for a **Serious Violence Strategic Lead** post to coordinate work on the plan, identify gaps and develop effective working relationships relating to violence with internal and external partners.

6.11. The **Serious Violence Duty**<sup>5</sup> is a new statutory duty that came into effect on 31st January 2023. It places a legal requirement on public sector organisations to reduce violence and focuses on a partnership approach to reducing and preventing serious violence. The responsible authorities are the Police, Local Authority, Fire and Rescue Authorities, justice organisations (including Youth Offending Teams and Probation) and Integrated Care Boards.

6.12. Boroughs have 12 months to implement the duty requirements, with the Community Safety Partnership agreeing to take the lead on coordinating. This work will include a serious violence strategic needs assessment to indicate local priority issues and development of a delivery plan for partners to collectively work on to reduce violence and support those vulnerable to being involved in violence.

6.13. **Met Turnaround Plan – A New Met for London<sup>6</sup>, July 2023**

6.14. One of the three priorities of the Met's Turnaround plan is 'community crime fighting' which includes taking a community first approach to tackling and reducing neighbourhood crime, ASB and serious violence. There is an aim to reduce the number of ASB incidents and number of calls to repeat locations. There is acknowledgement that these aims can only be achieved via partnership working with local authorities and other agencies.

6.15. **Partnership response in tackling ASB**

6.16. *Why a partnership approach is important for addressing ASB*

6.17. Individual organisations and agencies may receive reports or complaints about ASB. It is important that agencies work together so that information can be shared to help with the early identification of risk and so that interventions aimed at reducing ASB and supporting victims and enforcing against perpetrators can be coordinated effectively.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-duty>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/notices/met/a-new-met-for-london/>

- 6.18. We recognise that often ASB does not exist in isolation but may be a symptom of wider criminal or contextual safeguarding issues. For example, complaints relating to noise and disturbances at an address could turn out to be a result of a vulnerable resident having been intimidated and coerced into allowing people to use their address to supply drugs (known as ‘cuckooing’). By working together in partnership, we are better able to identify situations where ASB is linked to other risks and harms such as these.
- 6.19. The overall approach aims to ensure that there is a sufficient multi-agency focus of resources and interventions towards the locations suffering from the highest levels of persistent ASB and towards the individual cases of on-going ASB causing the greatest risk of harm towards individual victims.
- 6.20. As highlighted above, the Met Turnaround Plan also focuses on the importance of working in partnership to reduce crime and ASB to promote the safety and wellbeing of our communities. Locally, this is reflected in the establishment of a **borough level Superintendent and co-location of Merton’s Police ASB Lead** one day per week in the Safer Merton office. Work is ongoing to further develop co-location opportunities to further strengthen relationships and improve information sharing.
- 6.21. **Overview of partnership activity coordinated by Safer Merton to tackle ASB**
- 6.22. **Promoting awareness of ASB, addressing complaints, and informing residents of how to report ASB issues.** The Safer Merton ASB Team review and respond to every complaint received to their service, with **278** reports dealt with in Q1 2023-24 and **98%** responded to in the target timeframe.
- 6.23. In addition to ensuring complaints are responded to in line with KPIs, an action plan is developed for each case, with the ASB Team Manager undertaking regular audits of cases with the relevant ASB Officer to review processes and ensure consistency.
- 6.24. Information on how to report ASB and apply for an ASB Case Review<sup>7</sup> (formerly known as the Community Trigger) is on the ASB page of the Merton Council website and leaflets explaining how the service can support victims are circulated at community engagement events. This includes marking **ASB Awareness Week**, which in 2023 focused on the ASB Case Review process.
- 6.25. When dealing with complaints, in addition to working with the Police, work is undertaken with partners such as Housing, Environmental Health, Licensing and Waste Enforcement to support victims and take enforcement action where appropriate.
- 6.26. The LGO recently released a report assessing how Local Authorities deal with complaints of ASB.<sup>8</sup> Since September 2022 Merton has not received

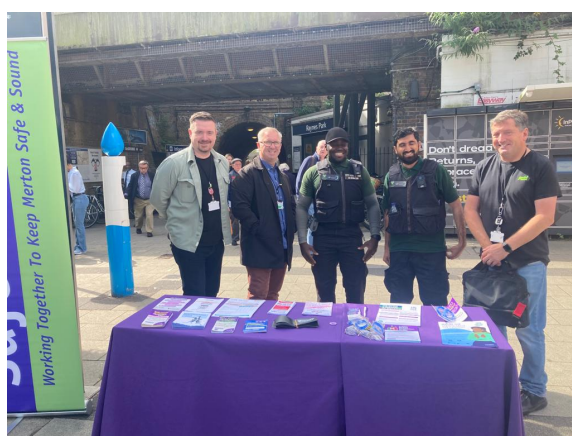
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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/anti-social-behaviour>

<sup>8</sup> [Focus report - Antisocial behaviour - August 2023 \(lgo.org.uk\)](#)

any complaints from the Ombudsman regarding ASB however any complaints would be reviewed and learnings incorporated into relevant processes where necessary.

- 6.27. **Monthly Partnership Tasking Meeting** co-chaired by Safer Merton and Police – a problem solving forum for different Council teams and partners (including CCTV, Homelessness, ASB, Waste Enforcement, Licensing, Clarion Housing, Green Spaces, Youth Outreach, Drug and Alcohol Services) to collaborate to identify locations that are hotspots for crime or ASB and work together to solve them.
- 6.28. Quarterly **Locations Board** meetings with local political leaders ensure that teams dealing with locations based issues are held to account for their actions. Going forwards these will be arranged into specific meetings for the Mitcham and Morden and Wimbledon areas.
- 6.29. A **weekly meeting** with the Police **Neighbourhoods Inspector** to feedback on key issues and identify areas requiring partnership working.
- 6.30. **Multi-agency Task and Finish Groups** to look at complex problem locations. This includes working in partnership with Police Designing Out Crime Officers where ASB is impacting on the community. Safer Merton led on **15** Task and Finish Groups between April 2022 – March 2023. At the time of writing a key piece of work includes the coordination of a multi-agency Task and Finish Group addressing ASB issues in Graveney ward, leading on the "top 20 street drinking" group to ensure those are identified, supported or if needed enforcement taken, and a project around designing out crime in the area around St Mark's Primary School in Mitcham in conjunction with Public Health.
- 6.31. Leading on quarterly **Days of Enhanced Visibility** at targeted locations to address specific concerns. So far in 2023 these have taken place in Mitcham and Raynes Park town centres, with the next taking place in Morden in September 2023. These involve working in partnership with Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Trading Standards, Licensing, Parking Services, Waste Services, Drug and Alcohol Outreach and Homelessness teams to meet residents, visit businesses, offer advice, and carry out enforcement activities. There is also a community engagement aspect to the days, with information stalls run by the ASB Team and Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams offering crime prevention initiatives such as bike marking and Neighbourhood Watch.



*Day of Enhanced Visibility in Raynes Park town centre, July 2023*

- 6.32. Partnership working between Police and the ASB Team to utilise **ASB tools and powers**. This includes using Premise Closure Orders to close premises that are causing ASB and disturbance to local residents. (Detail on the use of one tool, Public Space Protection orders to curb ASB, is below in Section 7).
- 6.33. For example in November 2022, the ASB Team led on the closure of a piece of land in Tamworth Lane, Mitcham, which was consistently being used to fly tip, with reports of street drinking and drug taking and dealing taking place too.
- 6.34. The ASB Team successfully obtained a Premises Closure Order in court after working in conjunction with the Council's Planning Team. The site was boarded up to prevent further incidences and help the community feel safer.
- 6.35. Other examples of the use of ASB tools and powers include:
- 6.36. <https://news.merton.gov.uk/2022/03/16/safer-merton-shuts-down-unlicensed-premises-in-mitcham>
- 6.37. <https://news.merton.gov.uk/2022/04/12/safer-merton-shuts-down-another-premises-over-anti-social-behaviour/>  
<https://news.merton.gov.uk/2022/06/20/safer-merton-supports-police-closure-of-premises-over-asb-concerns>
- 6.38. Leading on the **ASB Case Review** process for victims of persistent ASB which is not being addressed effectively by relevant agencies. During April 2022 - March 2023 Merton received five ASB Case Review applications.
- 6.39. Regular meetings with our largest housing provider **Clarion Housing** to work in partnership and share information to aid casework and support those impacted by ASB and take enforcement action where appropriate.
- 6.40. Joint working with the Police on the **Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Panel** which coordinates a multi-agency response to the most prolific offenders on borough to prevent reoffending threats to the community.
- 6.41. Working closely with the **Homelessness Team** to ensure a coordinated response to rough sleeping.
- 6.42. Co-chairing the **Community MARAC (CMARAC)**, a multi-agency meeting where high-risk cases involving vulnerable victims or perpetrators of ASB are discussed. The CMARAC develops action plans to address problematic behaviour affecting the community and safeguard victims. In the last year between April 2022 - March 2023 **53** cases were discussed, and risk assessed.
- 6.43. **Use of CCTV**. During the last 12 months, Merton Public Spaces CCTV operators recorded **3228** incidents. Of these **718** resulted in footage being downloaded for investigative or evidential purposes to support the Police, Council Enforcement team or other relevant agency.
- 6.44. The types of incidents, which have most commonly resulted in footage being captured to support investigation or enforcement, are fly tipping, road traffic

collisions, robbery, incidents relating to a vulnerable person, drug offences, and alcohol related ASB offences. Together these types of incidents account for **61%** of all evidence captured by CCTV. The team also assists the Police by gathering intelligence to assist with their planned operations.

- 6.45. **Deployment of CCTV to ASB hotspots.** Merton CCTV has 10 deployable cameras which are tasked to hotspots to gather intelligence. Taskings on where the cameras are to be located is coordinated via the monthly Partnership Tasking Meeting. There is a plan to purchase more deployable cameras to meet increasing demand.
- 6.46. A wide range of activity carried out by the **Regulatory Services Partnership (RSP)** helps tackle ASB. This includes the work of the Noise Nuisance Team who respond to over **3,000** noise complaints a year as well as the work of the Licensing and Trading Standards Teams.
- 6.47. The ASB Team work to support residents most in need by arranging a home visit if visiting the Civic Centre is not possible, and via referrals to Victim Support for further support if required.
- 6.48. The ASB Team also supports businesses in the community, for instance arranging leaflet drops to gather intelligence and evidence about ASB issues affecting them.
- 6.49. **Partnership work to tackle public space violence including Knife Crime (excluding Domestic Abuse)**
- 6.50. The Serious Violence Duty strategic needs assessment and delivery plan are currently in development, with a deadline set by the Home Office for these to be completed by 31 January 2024.
- 6.51. A small amount of funding assigned to the Duty for 2022-23 was utilised for a **Youth Integrated Offender Management (IOM)** pilot initiative, working with the Police and mentors from St Giles Trust SOS+ Service to support two young people who presented high levels of risk via an intensive mentoring programme. Funding for 2023-24 will be assigned to a contextual safeguarding intervention focusing on the Pollards Hill area, identified as a high violence area of the borough.
- 6.52. **Other violence interventions**
- 6.53. Safer Merton has also worked with Children, Schools, and Families Dept to secure funding from London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) for **St Giles SOS+ Service** to deliver contextual safeguarding work in schools within the highest violent crime areas in the borough. The work is delivered via preventative sessions on violence, vulnerability and exploitation and mentoring of young people at raised risk of gang-involvement, criminal child exploitation and violence with young people currently being mentored in six Merton schools. An example of positive feedback so far is below:
- 6.54. *"There was a boy who was refusing to attend school. He was worried about leaving his house because of what he was involved in. We did a gradual re-integration programme. He met with the mentor for an hour and we gradually increased it. It really helped."* Merton Schools Inclusion Co-ordinator.



- 6.55. Prevention and awareness raising sessions will also be provided to year group cohorts via school assemblies, with 400 students reached this FY so far.
- 6.56. In addition, professional sessions are being provided to schools so teachers have the knowledge to deal with issues they encounter with students around child criminal exploitation and gangs, and sessions are hosted for parents and carers on how to spot the signs of grooming. This intervention supplements the approach being delivered by the Council based Contextual Safeguarding Team.
- 6.57. A **CrimeStoppers Fearless** campaign ran in autumn 2022, encouraging young people to come forward and report violent crime confidentially. The campaign aimed to build trust and confidence in reporting and increase the number of reports to Police. The campaign ran for six weeks and was aimed at young people aged 13-17yrs. The campaign covered social media channels relevant to young people such as Instagram and Snap Chat, with adverts on Instagram reaching 29,032 individuals within the target demographic and on Snap Chat 99,814 individuals within the target demographic.
- 6.58. The campaign was promoted at key locations such as Merton College. Two awareness raising sessions were also held for professionals to understand the importance of signposting young people to this service and to understand the resources available. Over the campaign there were two reports made to CrimeStoppers from Merton borough.
- 6.59. At the time of writing, a campaign for autumn 2023 to launch to coincide with the return to school and darker evenings is being planned. This will focus on issues such as robbery, knife crime and snitching.
- 6.60. During 2022-23, **Bystander** training for professionals and the community also took place, with 9 sessions training 46 individuals on how to intervene safely during potentially violent incidents in public places. Following the sessions, 100% attendees said they would have the right tools to intervene in the future as a bystander.
- 6.61. Children, Schools, and Families dept are coordinating **Growing Against Violence (GAV)** knife crime interventions in one year group per secondary school in Merton. These workshops aim to counter youth violence and weapon carrying and protect young people against exploitation by gangs.
- 6.62. Work continues on Merton's **Violence and Vulnerability Reduction Plan**. The plan is reviewed by the London Violence Reduction Unit and ensures that actions to reduce violence remain up to date and have a focus on violence, vulnerability, and a public health approach. The plan captures the work of partners to support the reduction and prevention of violence in Merton. This includes initiatives such as weapons sweeps with a sweep held



in Morden Hall Park by Merton Police and partners in February 2023 resulting in an axe being recovered.

- 6.63. A monthly **Violence Communication Strategy Meeting** chaired by the Police and attended by Safer Merton and the Youth Offending Team. This discusses violent crimes of note on borough and how partnership working can put in place plans to mitigate and safeguard individuals involved.



- 6.64. Safer Merton assist with **contextual safeguarding** work, which seeks to respond to harms posed to young people outside their homes. This is via inputting into partnership meetings which focus on young people at risk. We work closely with the Council's Detached Outreach Team where there are areas of concern linked to violent crime and exploitation. For example, we are currently working with the Contextual Safeguarding Team on an designing a preventative initiative focusing on the Pollards Hill area which is a violence area of concern.

- 6.65. Following a significant spike in knife enabled robberies in late 2022, partnership working was utilised to identify nominals involved via regular **Borough Conflict Meetings**. A reduction in robberies was achieved through a combination of prevention and enforcement with this continuously being monitored through data and intelligence.

- 6.66. VRU **Critical Incident Funding** - Local Authorities can request a grant of up to £5,000 following incidents involving serious violence, or to support delivery which aims to prevent incidences from taking place. So far in 2023, Merton has successfully applied for nine grants to fund interventions such as parents sessions, school engagement sessions and family support following an attempted stabbing near to school premises, increased CCTV provision at a community centre affected by a violent incident and an autumn programme of detached youth work and workshops at key violence hotspots in the borough.

- 6.67. **Test purchasing** - In Merton during 2022/23 over 100 test purchases took place, covering the sales of knives, tobacco, vapes, alcohol and fireworks. So far in 2023/24, over 40 advisory visits and test purchases have taken place. Following legal guidance and carefully monitoring by **Trading Standards Officers** the underage volunteers attempt to buy restricted products. This type of activity helps ensure that all businesses are adhering to legal standards, protects children, and works to stop anyone under the age of 18 from buying age restricted products.

- 6.68. Data is received from residents, businesses, and multi-agency partners. Where premises or areas of concern are noted proactive visits are carried out to give targeted advice and/ or enforcement on the sale of age restricted products.

- 6.69. It should also be noted that businesses that sell fireworks must be registered and obtain a licence from the Council. Each year Trading Standards Officers carry out annual inspections within all business that sell fireworks, where operators are reminded of responsible operating and underage sales.

## **7 ALCOHOL RELATED PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) – MAKING MERTON A RESPONSIBLE DRINKING BOROUGH**

- 7.1. **Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)** are one of a range of measures introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Crime and Policing Act 2014 to combat ASB and its impact on individuals and communities.
- 7.2. A PSPO identifies a public space and prohibits certain activities within that area and/ or requires certain things to be done by persons engaging in certain activities within that area. PSPOs focus on identified problem behaviour(s), rather than targeting specific individuals or properties. A breach of a PSPO is a criminal offence.
- 7.3. In July 2023, the Council looked at available evidence, the results of a consultation with the public, Police and community representatives and an equalities impact assessment and implemented a borough wide PSPO to address alcohol related ASB. This replaced the existing PSPO which operated in five wards in the east of the borough (Cricket Green, Figges Marsh, Graveney, Lavender Fields and Ravensbury). The borough wide Order will be in place until July 2026.
- 7.4. It is important to note that the PSPO only applies to ASB related alcohol consumption. *Officers only enforce this prohibition when people drinking alcohol are currently or likely to cause ASB.*
- 7.5. If an individual is found to be breaching the restrictions, the Police or Council Enforcement Officers (Kingdom Security) can request they either stop drinking or surrender the alcohol. Anyone who does not comply with the request to stop drinking, or surrender the alcohol, will be issued with a £100 fixed penalty notice.
- 7.6. A PSPO is not solely an enforcement tool, importantly it is also an opportunity to provide pathways to access support for those vulnerable individuals for whom alcohol has become a challenge. This support is provided via signposting and referrals to the borough's drug and alcohol treatment service provider Via. During the 6-week judicial appeal period, officers are focussing on education engagement only. After this period enforcement can be used where appropriate.
- 7.7. To give an indication of the number of fines issued as part of the previous PSPO, between 01/01/2020-31/07/2023 across 3 of the 5 wards, there were 33 FPNS issued in total.
- 7.8. It also links with the Government's 10-year drugs strategy 'From Harm to Hope' which focuses on tackling drug supply, reducing drug demand and improving drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services. The Strategy states 'local partnerships should ensure that their plans sufficiently address alcohol dependence and wider alcohol-related harms.'

- 7.9. Making Merton a responsible drinking borough will help to ensure our public spaces such as parks, open spaces, and town centres are places for our communities to enjoy safely.
- 7.10. It should be noted the prohibition will only be exercised when *individuals are currently or likely to cause ASB*. Those wishing to enjoy alcohol in a public place sensibly without causing ASB can continue to do so.
- 7.11. **Partnership work to support the PSPO**
- 7.12. Partnership work is key to support the implementation of the PSPO. This work includes:
- 7.13. Tasking of Kingdom Enforcement Officers to hotspots to engage and educate. Where possible these patrols have been combined with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams and recently established Via drug and alcohol 'Assertive Outreach' worker.



***Joint PSPO patrol with Kingdom, Pollards Hill SNT and Via, July 2023***

- 7.14. New signage has been erected at locations across the borough reflecting the borough wide PSPO. These will be reviewed and refreshed where necessary, with the introduction of larger metal signage in town centre and hotspot areas.
- 7.15. Leaflets explaining the PSPO and referrals to Via drug and alcohol services have been produced in English and Polish and will also be translated into Tamil.
- 7.16. A multi-agency street drinking working group to identify the top 20 street drinkers in the borough and ensure they are offered relevant holistic support and enforcement where required continues to meet monthly.
- 7.17. Briefings held in August 2023 for Police, Members, and partners to understand the PSPO and its use.
- 7.18. Monitoring of the PSPO via the monthly Partnership Tasking Meeting.
- 7.19. Officers from the Licensing Team carry out proactive and reactive compliance visits to licensed premises selling/ supplying alcohol to ensure compliance with conditions of premises licences and responsible retailing ensuring that staff at licensed premises are not selling/ supplying alcohol to street drinkers or customers who are already drunk.

7.20. Multi-agency meetings are held to discuss complex licensing matters and action plans are devised to resolve issues. However, in some cases, a premises licence is reviewed, and the matter is referred to the Licensing Sub-Committee (LSC) to determine the best course of action. Actions taken by the LSC can include - modifications of the conditions of the licence, exclusion of licensable activity from the scope of the licence, removal of the Designated Premises Supervisor from the licence, suspension of licence for a period not exceeding three months or revocation of the licence.

7.21. The borough wide PSPO went live on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023. During the first six weeks focus is on education and engagement. At the time of writing, during the first three week period, Kingdom Enforcement Officers had 23 engagements with individuals regarding the PSPO, advising what the Order means and routes to services via the support leaflets.

## 7.22. **Hate crime**

7.23. We recognise the negative effect hate crimes can have on not just individuals but their families and communities and that some may feel uncomfortable reporting these crimes directly to the Police. Therefore, Merton's **Hate Crime Strategy**<sup>9</sup> centres on preventing hate crime and working with the community to increase confidence in reporting and encourage victims to come forward and obtain the support they need to prevent issues escalating.

7.24. Work on the hate crime agenda is driven by Merton's Hate Crime Strategy Group, made up of members from the Council and community partners representing each strand of hate crime.

7.25. Key initiatives include the promotion of the 24hr, 7 days a week **Stop Hate UK Helpline for Merton**, monthly **Merton Hate Crime Advice Surgeries** held at locations across the borough, and the development of a network of **Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centres**. Major organisations in the community such as AFC Wimbledon and Tooting and Mitcham FC and Merton Libraries have signed up to be hate crime Third Party Reporting Centres. Safer Merton also lead on **Hate Crime Awareness Week** each October which includes several community events including engaging with young people via schools.

## 7.26. **Merton Neighbourhood Watch**

7.27. Safer Merton also coordinates Merton Neighbourhood Watch, with over 400 watches across the borough. The aim of neighbourhood watch is to assist in reducing crime and the fear of crime. We work in partnership with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams to support the watches, providing crime figures, crime prevention advice, and updates from the Police and Community Safety



<sup>9</sup> <https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files/Merton%20Hate%20Crime%20Strategy%202022-26.pdf>

Team. Regular information is circulated regarding how to report crimes such as ASB via the correct channels.

- 7.28. In 2022-23, Merton Neighbourhood Watch also successfully applied via Merton's Safer Neighbourhood Board, for MOPAC Community Engagement Funding to run a crime prevention project which focused neighbourhood crime using initiatives, such as bike marking, and catalytic convertor marking events across the borough and shed alarm distribution to burglary hotspots. Funding has also been secured to carry out a further crime prevention project during 2023-24.



## 8 INTERVENTIONS TO TACKLE GRAFFITI AND FLY TIPPING

- 8.1. The Waste Enforcement Team will arrange for removal of offensive/ racist graffiti from properties and public areas within 48 hours. Other graffiti is removed from public and council owned areas within five days. Graffiti can also be removed from private properties provided prior permission has been granted by the property owner.
- 8.2. There is a current project ongoing to tackle graffiti on private property and land and which being conducted under the London Local Authority Act 1995, Section 12 and 13. This is a working process and is currently under review.
- 8.3. **Smart CCTV cameras**
- 8.4. There are 30 cameras in place across 10 locations, these camera units capture images of people dumping waste on our streets. The Waste Enforcement Team then conduct investigations based on any useable images, especially where vehicles are used in fly tipping.
- 8.5. **Monthly fly tipping group**
- 8.6. The Waste Enforcement Team hold a monthly meeting with colleagues from Veolia, Kingdom LAS, Comms and Public Space. It allows the teams to look at issues across the borough and what actions everyone can do to assist with tackling fly tipping, setting out potential working group tasks for the multiple agencies involved.
- 8.7. **Communications**
- 8.8. Over the last year the Waste Enforcement Team, CCTV and Comms have been working on regular monthly episodes of the 'Wall of Shame.' This features footage and images of individuals who are caught on

CCTV dumping waste and furniture on our streets. There has been 12 episodes released to date.<sup>10</sup>

- 8.9. Intel received from residents has resulted in several Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) being issued against those identified from episodes. The Waste Enforcement Team has also been targeting hotspot areas by stencilling the floor relating to dumping waste. An example can be found at Links Avenue in Mitcham, near the clothing bank bin. These stencils are not permanent so will fade over time. Should they need to be reinstated Officers have relevant tools to carry out this requirement.
- 8.10. **Role that Kingdom LAS play in littering enforcement and fly tipping/ time band waste**
- 8.11. Kingdom Officers are tasked with regular activities based on intel gathered and producing heat maps from Fix My Streets. Officers are deployed to various points across the borough, carrying out litter patrols in our town centres, assisting with Merton's time-banded collection areas. Regular twice weekly meetings are held with the team leader and area manager to ensure the tasks set are being met and to discuss any issues.

## **9 RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee notes and continues to support the work undertaken to tackle ASB in Merton.

## **10 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

Not relevant for this report.

## **11 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

The 2021 Safer Merton Community Safety Survey, the 2021 Annual Residents Survey and Your Merton Survey and the 2022 PSPO Consultation.

## **12 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **13 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

None for the purposes of this report.

## **14 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

None for the purposes of this report.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.merton.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/litter-fly-tipping-and-street-cleaning/wall-shame>

## 15 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report. Safer Merton in partnership with all Council departments, continue to ensure that the Council remains compliant with our duties under the Crime and Disorder Act.

## 16 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purpose of this report.

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

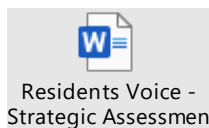
Annual Residents Survey 2021

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files?file=202120residents20survey20report.pdf>

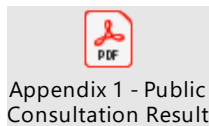
Your Merton Survey 2021

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/council-and-local-democracy/get-involved/yourmerton>

Community Safety Consultation 2021



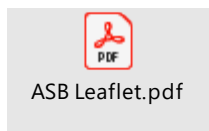
PSPO Consultation 2022



ASB web page

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/anti-social-behaviour>

ASB leaflet



PSPO web page

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/Public-Space-Protection-Order>

PSPO leaflets





PSPO Leaflet July  
2023.pdf



Via Merton Referral  
Leaflet July 2023.pdf

Hate crime web page

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/hate-crime>

Merton Neighbourhood Watch

<https://www.mertonnhw.co.uk/>

## 18 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

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