



COUNCILLOR DAVID SIMPSON CBE

(Conservative, Hillside Ward)

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Draft Police and Crime Plan Consultation
c/o Siobhan Coldwell
Head of Strategy
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Dear Ms Coldwell

Merton Conservative Councillors' Response to Consultation on Draft Police and Crime Plan

Conservative Councillors in the London Borough of Merton welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate over the future of policing in London and fully understand the need to reduce spending between now and 2015.

Merton Conservative Councillors welcome the fact that MOPAC and the MPS both recognise the need to maintain and improve the visibility of the uniformed police that we believe can be achieved by the introduction of the new Local Policing Model.

We are conscious that sacrifices have to be made in order to achieve the reduction in spending required and to that end we understand and accept the need to rationalise the MPS Estate.

Merton is consistently one of the safest London boroughs and our partnership working is second to none yet fear of crime is equally consistently top of the list of concerns of local residents as reported in our Annual Residents Survey.

To that end, as far as Merton is concerned, we are pleased that MOPAC has recognised that Wimbledon Police Station should remain open 24/7. This Police Station is located in the heart of the town centre just 100metres from the second busiest transport hub in south London after Clapham Junction. This is the point where the District Line, South West Trains, First Capital Connect and Tramlink all converge, along with numerous bus routes, and these modes of transport bring with them many of the people who sustain the substantial night time economy in Wimbledon Town Centre and the surrounding area, some of whom sadly are also responsible for the less welcome flipside of that same night time economy.

It is therefore imperative that the Custody Suite at Wimbledon Police Station should remain open 24/7 and that the experiment of moving the Custody Suite from Wimbledon to Sutton, which was tried and found seriously wanting some 18 months ago, is not repeated. We appreciate that this may mean changing the Commissioner's plan for Custody Suites but the experience of council officers and of successive Borough Commanders working in partnership through Safer Merton shows how important it is for the Custody Suite in Wimbledon to remain. Being located just 50metres from the start of the thriving night time economy and 100metres away from the aforementioned transport hub means that at present police officers can walk from the areas with the borough's highest crime hotspots to the Custody Suite. This reduces the reliance on police vehicles which we understand is the one of the aims of the current MOPAC consultation. An out of borough Custody Suite would undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of Merton's only 24/7 police station and we believe merging Wimbledon Custody Suite with Sutton or any other borough would ultimately be to the detriment of public safety.

Naturally we are sorry that Morden Police Office will close and that Mitcham Police Station will be reduced to a day time only station rather than being open 24/7 under current proposals. Equally we note the lack of use of that police station by the public after 10pm and acknowledge that in the current economic circumstances, it may not be sustainable to maintain 24/7 policing from this station and that the geography and nature of crime patterns in the east of Merton may lend itself to a more localised targeting of night time crime in that part of the borough. Again we recognise that, if there is to be only one 24/7 Police Station in the borough, then clearly because of the major transport links and the night time economy together with its custody suite, Wimbledon has to be the one to remain open 24/7.

We are naturally concerned by the reduction in senior officer numbers and are utterly opposed to any suggestion of sharing our Borough Commander with another borough. We also believe that the rank of Chief Superintendent is the most appropriate for this position.

We are pleased to note the introduction of Safer Neighbourhood Inspectors who look after a group of Ward Safer Neighbourhood teams. This we believe will assist and improve local management and give greater flexibility to manage local crime hotspots. We also support the drive to focus the Metropolitan Police's limited resources on manpower and increased frontline officer numbers and reluctantly accept that this may mean the closure over the next few years of some Safer Neighbourhood Team Offices as leases expire. However we are confident that, with sensible partnership working, full use can be made of libraries and other Council owned buildings as well as supermarkets etc. to facilitate widespread face to face contact with the public in generally less intimidating surroundings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Simpson'.

Councillor David Simpson
Crime Prevention Spokesman, Merton Conservative Group