



## CONSULTATION RESPONSE

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### **Westminster City Council's response to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) consultation on the Draft Police and Crime Plan**

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Westminster is home to over 240,000 people, and a work place for half a million more. In total, over a million people enter Westminster every day with many taking in the tourist and entertainment attractions it has to offer including Europe's largest Night Time Economy with over 3,000 licensed premises. All of this presents the council and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) with significant challenges when working to make the city a safer place to live, work and visit.

#### **1. Executive Summary**

The council welcomes the opportunity to respond to MOPAC's Police and Crime Plan Consultation Draft.

The council recognises the financial context in which the plan was devised and the need to find savings in the order of £500 million by April 2016, £300 million of which is needed to be saved in the first year. Having faced significant funding reductions ourselves over the past number of years we appreciate the difficult decisions when determining how scarce resources should be allocated.

Given this, the plan and in particular the Local Policing Model (LPM) looks to be a sensible path forward with its emphasis on improving the visibility of the police and increasing the total number of officers in London by 2015. Furthermore, the council is supportive of the safer neighbourhood policing model remaining the bedrock of the new structure as it is an effective mechanism which the community understands and trusts.

With respect to police numbers in Westminster, an increase of 157 officers in our Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) and maintaining officer numbers overall is welcomed news in light of earlier indications that the borough would see a significant reduction in police officer numbers. Police numbers in Westminster need to reflect that it is home to the largest Night Time Economy in Europe and a plethora of government and diplomatic buildings and iconic sites which make it a target borough in terms of terrorism.

The council also recognises that in the context of savings having to be made, decreasing front counter visits and an emphasis on getting more officers out on the street, of the need to close a number of underutilised police stations across London. However, the proposed police station closures in Marylebone, St John's Wood and Harrow Road are of significant concern to residents and businesses in the north of the borough in particular, who view the closures as a shift in operational policing towards the south and the West End. Although there may be opportunities to utilise council buildings and other civic sites, careful consideration needs to be made as to how these would be utilised effectively, consulting with local residents and businesses to ensure their needs are met.

The council would like MOPAC to take the following into account when finalising the plan and by the MPS when implementing the plan:

- The West End is a high profile, national and international asset and deserves to be policed appropriately. It should not, however, be resourced at the expense of other areas of

Westminster as under the LPM there will be greater flexibility in terms of how police resources will be deployed across the borough. It is important that the right balance is struck.

- The location, visibility and access to police officers need to reflect both crime and the fear of crime which can negatively affect our residents' quality of life and our local economy.
- The council recognises community concern from residents and local democratic representatives about the impact of the closures of the three police stations in the north of the borough. While welcoming news that the response teams will now be based from both Paddington Green and Belgravia, there is still considerable concern as to the impact it will have on response times to parts of the north of the borough given data suggesting otherwise has not been produced.
- The council requires detailed modelling from the MPS of the operational impact of the LPM on the following:
  - response times across the borough based on proposed station closures and contact points,
  - the way in which local police resources will be tasked under the new model,
  - role of dedicated local officers, separate from the wider SNT resource,
  - the way in which current partnership policing needs will be met under the new model e.g. licensing, troubled families, gangs etc.

This information will give a clear indication as to how the new model will differ from what is currently in place and allow for a greater level of accountability and an opportunity to measure success.

- As outlined in the Draft MOPAC/MPS Estate Strategy, Paddington Green Police Station will be considered for a full redevelopment or refurbishment. While the council recognises and supports the need for such redevelopment or refurbishment, given the importance of the station we stress the need for adequate replacement provision during any extended periods of closure or part closure.
- The council would like assurances that alternate provision of appropriate facilities for public access to the police are established before any future closures.
- There should be a degree of flexibility when determining the opening hours at both Belgravia and Paddington Green Police Station to reflect the needs and demands of the community.
- The 20% reduction in key crimes referred to in the Crime and Police Plan does not include quality of life crime as one of the 7 priorities. This remains a priority area for our residents as shown in the council's recent Reputation Tracker Survey. In addition, legislation more widely is asking more of police and local authorities in tackling high risk anti-social behaviour.
- While the Community Safety Unit within the MPS is remaining, it is to be significantly reduced in size which will detrimentally impact both children's services and specialist domestic violence providers. Furthermore, it needs to be made clear whether other dependent resources such as licensing are subject to reductions or redistribution.

Below the council has answered a number of specific questions posed by MOPAC in their questionnaire.

**2. Do you think that confidence in the Metropolitan Police needs to be improved? If so, how do you think it could be done?**

Yes, there is no doubt that public confidence in the Metropolitan Police has suffered in recent years following incidents such as the phone hacking scandal. From a local government perspective in particular, we feel it is critically important to focus on improving young people's confidence and trust in the police. While the council acknowledges that the police have made many improvements in this area, more needs to be done given that many young people still feel they are the victims of police activity, rather than the beneficiaries.

To help rectify this problem, the council stresses the need for greater engagement and dialogue between the police and young people, especially in a school environment. The council has found the Growing Against Gangs and Violence (GaGV) education programme which has been carried out in a number of Westminster's schools to be very effective in making police more approachable for young people. In addition, police officers would benefit from receiving specific training on how to work with young people to ensure they are better equipped to do so.

With regard to the use of Section 60 ('Stop and Search') under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the police should be required to engage more with the local authority and the wider community through regular working groups as to how these powers are used. The use of 'Stop and Search' powers has had a detrimental impact on relations between the police and young people as outlined in the draft plan and must be addressed.

**3. The Mayor is committed to having an effective, efficient police force in London. In order to do this, the Mayor has prioritised keeping police officer numbers high rather than keeping underused buildings open. Do you think that the focus should be on maintaining either police numbers or police buildings?**

The council understands the financial pressures that the Met is facing as over the past two years, the council has had to find savings in the order of £60 million. This has involved the rationalising of some of the council's buildings to ensure that our frontline services and the most vulnerable members of our community are protected. As such, the council supports the Mayor's priority of keeping police officer numbers high rather than keeping underused buildings open.

The council will continue to work closely with Westminster Police to assess the suitability of civic sites, including council premises to co-locate police officers to improve public access to and visibility of the MPS. Such a co-location model will also help mitigate the proposed closures of St John's Wood Police Station, Harrow Road Police Station and Marylebone Police Station in Westminster.

**4. The Mayor's plans for effective crime prevention are outlined in part four of the draft Police and Crime Plan. What, if any, other things could be done to prevent crime?**

In order to effectively prevent crime in our communities it must be approached in a holistic manner, with support across many public services. We have learnt over many years that no one organisation working in isolation is able to effectively break the cycle of crime. Only by working in partnership involving a number of sectors from probation, health to social services can we begin to tackle the underlying social and economic determinants of crime. In this regard, Community Safety Partnerships are an important forum to form and inform views as to how best to reduce crime and disorder in our local communities.

Local authorities in particular are a critical link in the chain as they have a number of responsibilities including licensing, premises management, children's services and the commissioning of crime prevention programmes.

The role that health can play in crime prevention has not yet been fully acted upon but with health commissioning to become localised this year the timing is opportune for this to change. This requires pan London co-ordination involving a number of sectors and organisations that MOPAC should drive.

**5. The Mayor's plans for justice and resettlement are outlined in part four of the draft Police and Crime Plan. What, if any, other things could be done to address justice and resettlement issues?**

The council supports London's criminal justice system coming under the responsibility of the Mayor as it presents an opportunity to effectively deal with the challenge of supporting resettlements outside of a council's boundary.

The council also believes that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) needs to play a greater and more active role as part of the Community Safety Partnership. The decision to reorganise and centralise the CPS must not come at the expense of working with local teams and using local knowledge via organisations such as local authorities to better cater for victims and to better support the Criminal Justice System.

In addition, the CPS needs to prioritise certain crimes with dedicated resources such as domestic violence with specially trained prosecutors, Magistrates and Police. This is a proven structure as Westminster's recently established Dedicated Domestic Violence Court had already shown a clear need for this type of legal format. It is important that the right balance is struck between specialists and generalists as the funding reductions have seen a significant reduction in specialists throughout the CPS.

**6. What, if any, other key crime and safety issues that are important to you would you include in the Police and Crime Plan?**

As a central London borough and the heart of the capital, Westminster has high instances of crime and anti-social behaviour being carried out by offenders who reside outside of the borough. This poses a number of problems for the council as we have no day to day dealings with the offender as once identified he/she is the responsibility of his/her residing borough in terms of intervention and rehabilitation. This means that the burden of the problem falls on Westminster yet the solution lies elsewhere which the council has no influence on.

This is further exacerbated by Westminster being a draw card for a large number of international migrants who are unable to support themselves and often revert to begging and other forms of anti-social behaviour. Operation Chefnak which ran from November 2011 to October 2012 was a multi-agency approach aimed at tackling these issues and recorded 698 offences of begging and 922 instances of rough sleeping, the majority of which concerned Romanian nationals. Furthermore, 169 repatriations were arranged, 138 of which were to Romania at a significant cost to the council.

To help rectify this problem, the Mayor, through MOPAC needs to develop a pan-London system whereby the actions of London's local authorities are not in isolation and there are greater incentives for cross-borough working with regard to targeting problem offenders.

**7. Are there any other issues affecting you that have not been covered in the draft Police and Crime Plan?**

The draft Police and Crime Plan does not sufficiently recognise the critically important role of health in violence prevention. This is of particular interest to local authorities given that from April responsibility for public health and some health services will transfer from the NHS to councils.

A recent report by the Centre for Public Innovation entitled 'Information Sharing to tackle violence Audit of progress on delivering the Coalition Commitment 2012' found that 13 of London's 31 hospitals engaged in no data sharing with Community Safety Partnerships, with only three hospitals rated as 'high performing'. Given effective information and intelligence sharing is essential for the success of a Community Safety Partnership; MOPAC should be playing an active regional role in such cases where there are blockages in information flows across London.