



Heart of London Business Alliance
West End Business Improvement Districts

Siobhan Coldwell
Head of Strategy
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)
10 Dean Farrar Street
London, SW1H 0NY

6th March 2013

Dear Siobhan

Re: Submission on Draft Police & Crime Plan 2013-2017

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft plan.

Our business area covers key parts of the Westminster Borough including Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square, Piccadilly & St James's. We operate two Business Improvement Districts, representing over 500 businesses and property owners in the districts. These are iconic areas of London which experience some of the highest rates of crime in the borough, given the high footfall on area streets. Our top priority is the safety of our districts. As such we partner closely with the Metropolitan Police Service and Westminster City Council in addressing various issues that impact the business environment of the area.

In providing feedback on the MOPAC plan, we suggest that the following principles be included in the final plan:

LOCAL PRIORITIES

While we share the MOPAC challenge that the MPS reduce the top 7 priority crimes across London, we would request that local priorities be also given high priority. Our current street-based concerns include a significant amount of anti-social behaviour and illegal street activity, including begging, rough sleeping, pedicabs, and touting for example. Such matters are not specifically noted as the MPS's overall priorities, but nevertheless have a significant impact on West End streets. Such issues set a negative tone on the street and are often closely related to the top 7 priority crimes. We would request that the MOPAC plan empower the allocation of resources to address local issues, which are not necessarily the same issues in each borough and London-wide.

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VISIBILITY

A highly visible police presence contributes to public and business confidence of our area. We can appreciate the resource challenge of providing such coverage throughout each London borough. Our request is that the MPS not lose sight of the benefits of proactive police foot patrols, especially when focused on areas with high foot flow that are experiencing high amounts of crime. To support a highly visible police presence, there is a specific challenge that needs to be overcome. This challenge is the loss of police officers off the street for much of their shifts when processing offenders. We would also add that police deployment in the West End needs to be considerate of our times of high foot fall, which includes night time, evenings, and weekends.

PROBLEM SOLVING

We appreciate that the plan makes a commitment to ensuring resources are appropriately allocated to Safer Neighbourhood Teams. Having such resources is critical for working on local priorities. What is likewise critical is a commitment to problem solving. This is both an approach and attitude that involves working with partners in developing plans for either solving an issue or managing the issue. There is considerable work being led by Westminster City Council in reinvigorating the problem solving capacity of the partnership with the MPS, Business Improvement Districts, and other community stakeholders. We are seeking the principle of problem solving to be a key theme in the final MOPAC plan.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

While crime reduction is obviously a key objective of the draft MOPAC plan, safety is everyone's responsibility. In the West End, there is a tremendous commitment by Westminster City Council evident by fortnightly Local Partnership Briefings & the action log process. Further, considerable resources are currently deployed on area streets through our business alliance's funding of Westminster Wardens in addressing street issues and our team of West End Ambassadors that liaises with our hundreds of our businesses each month. Such street teams can serve to help communicate safety messages to businesses if briefed by the MPS. Likewise, we are in a position to engage the trained door staff at the area's licensed premises, which would contribute to the safety of the evening and night time economy. Considerable partnership opportunities exist when there is an intention to partner and align our respective resources to achieve our common goals.

SAFER BUSINESS TEAMS

The MOPAC plan puts good emphasis on Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs). Such terminology is appropriate for largely residential neighbourhoods. In the West End, the identity of our areas is predominately business oriented with a focus on the retail, hospitality, and office sectors. We would recommend that the plan going forward allow for the SNTs to be appropriately called Safer Business Teams. Further, with the focus on safety of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) such as ours, we would recommend that such Safer Business Team catchment areas be aligned with BID boundaries. This provides the MPS with a real opportunity to leverage the resources, investment, and partnerships that are already at work at work in contributing to the community's well being.

COMMUNICATIONS

As an organisation that works closely with the MPS on a daily basis, we know well the ongoing commitment of the service to working with our business members and the community. Unfortunately, we don't believe that the work of the MPS is widely understood or appreciated. Our recommendation for the MOPAC plan is to be highly intentional in communicating the successes and the challenges facing the MPS in our community. This includes ongoing communication of crime statistics and the use of such figures to demonstrate the success and challenges within the community. The business liaison role that we serve in the Heart of London BID areas provides such a mechanism to reaching out to area businesses and likewise opportunities for businesses to share their concerns and partner with the MPS.

STABILITY

Restructuring can be a challenge at all levels within an organisation. Uncertainty about one's job can impact morale. As the MOPAC plan is finalised and implemented, we would recommend that there be a specific focus on seeking to stabilise positions at the MPS. We would note that as a longstanding partner with the MPS, we experience the ongoing challenge of working with the MPS given constant personnel changes at all levels within the organisation. A focus on improving the length of tenure that individuals serve in positions and a focus on smooth succession, we believe would contribute to improving morale within the MPS and the confidence of partners such as ourselves.

We would respectfully ask that these above principles be key themes in your work on finalising the MOPAC plan.

Warm regards,



Sarah Porter
Chief Executive

- c.c. Stephen Greenhalgh, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Greater London Authority
Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service
Craig Mackey, Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service
Mark Rowley, Assistant Commissioner, Specialist Crime & Operations Directorate
Simon Byrne, Assistant Commissioner, Territorial Policing
Alison Newcomb, Commander, Westminster and Royal Parks, Metropolitan Police Service
Kevin Hobson, Chief Inspector, Westminster, Metropolitan Police Service
Councillor Nickie Aiken, Cabinet Member for Community Protection and Premises,
Westminster City Council