

Overview & Scrutiny

London Borough Of Hackney's Community Safety and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission

This is the consultation response to the public consultation being carried out by the London Mayor's London Office for Policing and Crime from **London Borough of Hackney's Community Safety and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission**.

This Commission has responsibility for scrutinising the Community Safety Partnership of London Borough of Hackney.

This response is a reflection of the public views expressed to and by the Commission and draws on public meetings, evidence sessions, question and answer sessions and consultation events that have taken place in relation to Crime, Disorder and Community Safety.

1. What, if any, other objectives and goals would you add to the Mayor's objectives and goals?

The Consultation document stated "*during 2012, the biggest concerns raised were **anti-social behaviour, gangs, stop and search, and the relationship between young people and the police.***" In Hackney these same concerns have been raised and noted by the Commission. However we were disappointed to see that the priorities of the Mayor of London for the Police and Crime Plan do not have targets to address these areas of concern.

The Commission has been monitoring local work between the MPS, Council and Partners to address areas of concern like those stated above especially since the August 2011 disturbances in Hackney.

We urge the MOPAC / Mayor of London to take account of the voice of Londoners and seek to address the areas of concerns raised in 2012. These challenge areas have implications for the police and community relations and we believe it is important to hear the voice of local people.

2. What, if any, other things could be done to address police performance and resource issues?

The Commission has noted locally concerns raised about the Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNTs) in relation to the proposed structure and new workload. The Hackney public have queried if SNTs will have the ability to do local policing as they do now. The Commission would like to have seen in the documentation some comparison data against other models showing how the SNT model since implementation has aided improvements in

Police performance and how their proposed model will build on achievements made.

Local discussions (at public meetings - CAP MPS Engagement Event and CSSI) have highlighted concerns about the proposed structure for SNTs taking the required number of Officers per team from 6 to 3.

We highlight locally the full complement of Officers for the current SNT structure is not to capacity and are concerned that with the potential of Officer diversion for public order events in Central London the proposed structure will not be to capacity too or just operate on the core number of officers only.

The proposal to operate with a smaller SNT structure in Hackney presents significant risk. The risks of reducing SNT numbers in Hackney give us great concern. Although moving to a smaller structure will give the impression that Hackney SNTs are at full capacity, in reality the proposal could mean fewer Officers on the ground. This risks affecting police performance and diverting Officers from neighbourhood policing onto investigative work, instead of them being out building community relations.

3. Do you think the confidence in the Metropolitan Police needs to be improved? How do you think that could be done?

In response to part 1 of this question the answer is **yes**.

Community confidence in the police has increased recently. There appears to be a desire to implement a one size fits all model, with a lack of consideration or thought about the implications to the different local communities in London; which in our view potentially has implications on police and community relations. There is a concern locally that under the MOPAC policing and crime plans the good community relations that have been established will now be broken. Locally there are strong reservations about suggestions such as the alternative places to report crime, especially with regards to the police entering the homes of victims reporting crimes or witnesses reporting crime. We would welcome more detail on exactly how witnesses and victims would be protected from reprisal or retaliation should they be seen speaking to the police or inviting the police into their homes.

Addressing police relations with the community is a key area. Locally a lot of work has taken place in a bid to repair community relations and build trust between the neighbourhood Police and the community.

In Hackney local residents have repeatedly expressed feeling targeted by the Police especially in relation to the MPS stop and search activity. The Commission is monitoring local MPS stop and search activity. This has lead locally to initiatives being set up to help improve community relations for both MPS Officers and the community (young people and adults). Initiatives of note include local MPS Officer training and the establishment of interactive monitoring groups. These have been set up for both young people and adults to engage with Hackney MPS and open up dialogue

between the community and the Police about their stop and search work. This work has allowed both parties to learn from each other and understand the respective impact of their actions. This type of work could benefit from being carried out across London.

We urge for MOPAC to consider sensitivity and how this will work for each borough locally. It is our desire to see policing transformed but not at the risk of a negative impact on local communities leading to a break down in relationships.

4. The Mayor has prioritised keeping police officer numbers high rather than keeping underused buildings open. **Do you feel that the focus should be on maintaining police numbers or police buildings? How else could budget savings be made?**

In the consultation document we noted that in real terms the number of Police Officers in Hackney will only increase by 3 to 2015. Hoxton/Haggerston in Hackney are very busy wards. Dalston's night time economy has increased in recent years and resolutions to dealing with it have been slowly improving. The new model has potential to slow down responses further. The new policing model being proposed has the potential to slow down our progress. This risks reversing the reductions in crime over recent years.

We would welcome clarification on **how figures were calculated**. The Commission points out that with Hackney's community safety needs and diverting of officers to public order events in Central London as required. We query the criteria or formula used to determine the number of officers each borough should be increased by. We note in contrast to Hackney the vast majority of London boroughs have a settlement substantially larger than 3 officers. The Commission is of the view that Hackney's Borough warrants a more significant increase than that proposed under the plan.

The Commission has been informed that the SNT three Police will not include PCSOs. However, with a high officer turnover the main stability in neighbourhood policing teams is the PCSOs. The view expressed to the Commission is that the reduction in PCSOs is likely to affect community reassurance, particularly to the elderly and vulnerable and we urge MOPAC to carefully consider and plan for a stable model.

In relation to the MPS suggestions for local estate disposal the Commission understands the rationale behind releasing underused buildings in the MPS estate. However the Commission wishes to point out the potential problems and impact on community relations, crime reporting etc in relation to the proposal to designate Stoke Newington station as the 24 hour station in the Borough. The Commission would urge for consideration to be given to particular local circumstances and history when making decisions about the MPS estate and thought given as to how the challenges and obstacles in this particular situation will be overcome to implement this proposal without negative impact to community relations, crime reporting, bail

reporting etc.

People reporting crime should have a safe, confidential place to go. Local people do not see supermarkets and post offices or reporting crimes from their home as providing this. Furthermore, Post Office closures could undermine any proposals to use them as a place to report crime. We would urge MOPAC to reconsider the use of supermarkets and Post Officers for crime reporting.

5. What, if any, other things could be done to prevent crime?

At the end of the last century, Hackney's reputation had a long association with high crime but we are pleased to say great strides have been made in recent years in reducing crime in the borough. The local view is the policing model has the potential to create an increase in crime hot spots especially with regards to estates.

Furthermore the imminent Welfare Reforms are anticipated to significantly affect Hackney's residents. These issues are creating a worry that with the two issues combined it could take communities back to where before neighbourhood policing was implemented. There is potential for the new model to have a negative impact on boroughs with deprived areas. Crime reduction has been significant in the past and there is local concern that under the new model all the progress we have made in crime reduction will cease.

6. What, if any, other things could be done to address justice and resettlement issues?

The Commission noted recently the challenge in relation to information sharing between the Council's services e.g. LBH Young Hackney and the Justice system as an area for improvement, raising questions about the discrepancies in recording data on young offenders. We therefore welcome the proposal in establishing an effective Integrated Offender Management (page 28 of the consultation document) and hope to see real change that results in information sharing leading to a greater correlation of the figures and information held by both parties. We urge MOPAC to look at partnership working so that the support package and opportunities for early intervention especially for young offenders is not hindered. A new service model for young offenders has been implemented in Hackney and changes to partnership working. A more integrated offender management system will aid early intervention and support better resettlement.

7. What, if any, other key crime and safety issues that are important to you would you include?

There has been considerable partnership working locally to achieve crime reduction especially in relation to the night time economy and gang activity. But there is huge concern among local residents for their safety related to

the proposals for crime reporting and how station closures will impact on bail reporting. For example, there is a question over whether the number of people failing to turn up for reporting increase because of the location of the station.

The prospect of the police visiting a person's home for crime reporting purposes are viewed in Hackney as potentially dangerous, carrying a high risk for the victim or witness to become the target for retaliation. The strength of feeling locally is that, until victims and witnesses can be assured of robust protection arrangements these plans could potentially result in reducing the number of people willing come forward to report crime. There is the challenge in Hackney of reassuring people of their safety by the Police should they come forward. The Commission is of the view that more work needs to be carried out to give people the assurance they seek before new channels such as those proposed in the consultation document are introduced.

We are concerned that MOPAC run the risk of creating a bigger division between the Police and the local people they serve should consideration not be given to the historical context. We are concerned that the proposed policing and crime plan could result in a decline in the number of people being brought to justice should the community support and co-operation decline due to the lack of sensitivity in the proposals and the one size fits all model. Partnership working in Hackney has successfully improved police community relations in Hackney and this could be put at risk under the proposal

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

Hackney's Borough has a growing population of young people. The police, particularly Hackney Police, need to do more to engage young people in this consultation process.

The recruitment of Officers to inner London MPS from the home counties and beyond has been an issue for Hackney. It is the local view that this recruitment approach has contributed to Police activities like stop and search being very contentious. The local population wish to see more Police Officers recruited from London boroughs rather than the home Counties where the individual may have limited experience, exposure and knowledge about ethnic minority communities and dealing with diverse communities like Hackney's.