

**Councillor Anood Al Samerai**  
Liberal Democrat Group Leader

Southwark Council  
Liberal Democrat Group Room  
160 Tooley Street  
London SE1P 5LX

5 March 2013

Dear Mayor, Deputy Mayor

In response to the ongoing consultation on the draft Police and Crime Plan, I would like to outline some concerns on behalf of Southwark Liberal Democrat Group.

As locally elected councillors, we do not support the proposed cuts to frontline police services and we would like to strongly object to plans to close the three stations at Rotherhithe, Camberwell and Dulwich and to reduce opening hours at two of the remaining police stations in Southwark and Peckham. Under this proposal, the 290,000 residents of the entire borough would be secured by only one 24-hour police station in Walworth!

The situation would be made worse were plans to 'restructure' the safer neighbourhood teams to also go ahead. We echo the fears of Liberal Democrat London Assembly member, Caroline Pidgeon, who previously warned that *"These proposals will decimate the successful safer neighbourhood teams that have operated in every ward across London for the last decade. If implemented there is a real fear that we will return to the dark days when the public had far less contact and interaction with their local police"*. The plans to have only one Police Constable and Police Community Support Officers will have drastic consequences in terms of both the local knowledge available to assist with investigations and public confidence levels across local communities.

According to the MET website, 'violence against the person – most serious violence' and 'personal robbery' are rated as respectively high and above average in Southwark and over a third of residents attribute a 'fair', 'poor' or 'very poor' ratings to the success of the police in meeting these challenges. This evidence serves not to criticise but rather to emphasise the very valuable work which the remaining police officers are doing across the borough and, we hope, to impress upon you the continuing and critical need for full police cover in Southwark. With similar plans proposed for neighbouring Lambeth and Lewisham, it is hard to see how guarantees can be made that crime priorities and objectives will be achieved across south-east London.

We understand that budget efficiencies need to be made, but we urge you to reconsider the current proposals in light of their far reaching impact on the safety of residents in the borough. At present, little information is available on where Safer Neighbourhood Teams will be based. We fear that any savings made will be outweighed by new inefficiencies, namely the need for officers to spend a significant amount of their shift time travelling to and from their areas of operation. As such, we ask that you work with the council put in place a system of alternative frontline services before withdrawing any existing services in Southwark. We believe that police operations need to continue to be designed with local needs in mind and need to allocate resources which are able to respond proportionate to ongoing local public safety issues.

Best wishes



**Councillor Anood Al Samerai**, Liberal Democrat Group Leader