

Safer Harrow (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership for Harrow)

Response to the consultation draft Police and Crime Plan 2013-2017

Safer Harrow considered the draft Police and Crime Plan 2013-2017 at their meeting on 1st February.

Safer Harrow noted the ambitious targets relating to crime reduction, confidence in the Police and savings. The Group felt, however, that the plethora of priorities set out in the Plan including those included in the Mayor's Decision (MOPAC 2012 19); The priorities that guide the work of MOPAC, and the 2012 manifestos priorities together create a confused picture of the Mayor's vision for the Metropolitan Police – especially when contrasted with the simplicity of the 20:20:20 approach.

Safer Harrow were also concerned that Part Four of the Plan – “Strategies – How this will be delivered” failed to describe in any detail how the priority of reducing ‘neighbourhood’ crime by 20% would be achieved. The Plan describes why the particular crime types were identified for inclusion in the 20% reduction target but contains no ideas for addressing these crimes and, almost immediately, begins to discuss important but unrelated issues such as Counter-terrorism. The absence of ideas on how to approach such a significant crime reduction target calls into question the evidential basis from which the target has been developed and the practicality of achieving it.

Safer Harrow were further concerned by the savings target and the apparent assumptions that, first, the back office is capable of delivering the bulk of a £500m reduction in expenditure and, secondly and more importantly, that back office reductions will have no or limited impact on front line performance. Back office functions such as crime analysis are crucial in delivering efficiencies through intelligence led policing. There is concern that efforts to reach the ambitious crime reduction target will be fatally undermined by the impact of spending reductions.

Safer Harrow also addressed the seven consultation questions as follows:

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

Safer Harrow welcome the identification of the 7 crime types for which a 20% decrease will be sought across London but questions how this can be achieved while making a 20% reduction in costs.

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

The development of workable, evidence based, practical and costed approaches to reducing the rate of the 7 key crime types would demonstrate that the targets are achievable.

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

Yes. The proposals relating to stop and search, community engagement and transparency are welcome and will do much to increase confidence. However, the key to increasing confidence is the degree to which the Police are able to reduce crime and the answer to 2 above will also have the greatest impact on this and, thereby, on confidence as well.

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?

Numbers rather than buildings is clearly the right direction. There is, however, a balance regarding confidence in that, while seeing officers on the beat does increase confidence, knowing that there is a police station in the vicinity does so as well. With the reduction in visible local police presence, additional work will be needed to publicise sessions in community buildings, including a visible blue lamp or equivalent, to make up for the loss of the familiar community landmarks that are local police stations.

There may be further work on the modernisation of terms and conditions of service of Police Officers that could be implemented to, for example, reduce the need for overtime (and its cost) and introduce more flexibility to have more officers on duty at peak demand times.

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

Better public education about keeping people and property safe would reduce the opportunities for easy burglary, theft of and from motor vehicles, robbery and theft from the person. Inspiring the public to report more crimes more quickly would provide better intelligence that can lead to quicker arrests.

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

The key to reducing re-offending are to help offenders to become more securely integrated back into society with settled accommodation and a job or employment-related training. The Integrated Offender Management Scheme is doing just this but is resourced for only a small proportion of offenders. However, the scheme is working with those at the highest risk of re-offending and is achieving early but impressive results. Scaling up this type of scheme could help larger numbers of offenders to not to re-offend but would require additional priority for offenders in access to housing and employment. This approach needs to build in the intention to extend probation (or probation-type) work with offenders sentenced to less than 12 month terms.

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

The report refers to under reporting of domestic violence and hate crimes and proposes making it easier to contact the Police as a way of address this. This betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the reasons for under-reporting which do not for the overwhelming majority of victims relating to the ease or otherwise of reporting but to the low levels of confidence that their problem will be resolved, that they will be helped and that the process and at least short-term consequences will not be worse than continuing to live with the problem.

We would like to see an explicit recognition that under reporting of domestic violence is due to the inevitable upheaval in people's and family's lives that can, for a while at least, be considered to be a price not worth paying for attempting to cease violence and the fear that reporting may intensify the problem. The proposal later in the report that the London Crime Prevention Board will commission and fund a pan-London domestic violence service is welcome but contains too few details to be able to assess whether the envisaged service can help support victims to be able to report earlier.

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

Despite the Mayor recognising in the early parts of the report that Anti-Social Behaviour is one of the public's main concerns, ASB does not appear as an issue that has been identified for an at least 20% reduction by the end of the plan period. There is scope for a better and more co-ordinated approach to addressing ASB in London between the Police, local authorities, social landlord and others and it would be helpful to see that Mayor support initiatives from the London Crime Reduction Board and local Councils and their partners in this respect.