

## Feedback to MOPAC Policing and Crime Plan

### Introduction

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) held the first of their borough Policing and Crime Plan roadshows in Lambeth on 9 January. On the evening, immediately following the meeting, and in the following days, it became clear a number of those attending would have welcomed an opportunity for a better prepared, and more in-depth, consideration of the plan. A number of issues came to the fore in conversations around the borough and in more formal settings, such as Lambeth Council's Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 22 January.

In response, Lambeth CPCG devoted much of its 5 February meeting to the MOPAC Plan and this was structured in the format of 'breakout' discussion groups. Attendees were provided with a briefing of key issues emerging so far within the borough. In addition the breakout groups were provided with a discussion brief of 6 questions, in order to ensure that there was some commonality of issues addressed. It was stressed however that the groups were free to address whatever issues they wished.

What follows is a summary of the combined feedback from those groups.

#### Question 1:

The Plan sets a target for a 20% reduction in a set of priority crimes which it identifies as:

Burglary, Vandalism, Theft Of and From Motor Vehicles, Violence with Injury, Theft from Person

What do you think of the target and this choice of priority crimes?

#### Key points in feedback from breakout groups:

That the 20% target seemed arbitrary. Indeed the '20:20:20' challenge was described as 'more a slogan than a strategy'. There was questioning of how the targets were arrived at and whether they are really achievable.

That the priority crimes chosen in the MOPAC P&C Plan contrast with those of the Safer Lambeth Partnership. The MOPAC plan prioritises three crimes against property and two against the person, the SLP priorities are overwhelmingly concerned with crimes against the person.

<p>MOPAC Priority Crimes are</p> <p><b>Burglary</b></p> <p><b>Vandalism</b></p> <p><b>Theft Of and From Motor Vehicles</b></p> <p><b>Violence with Injury</b></p> <p><b>Theft from Person</b></p>	<p>Safer Lambeth Partnership priorities are:</p> <p><b>Serious Violent crime - Youth related crime</b>          Serious youth violence          Personal robbery          Knife crime</p> <p><b>Serious Violent crime - Gangs -Gun crime</b>  <b>Serious Violent crime - Violence Against Women and Girls</b>          Domestic violence          Serious sexual offences          Rape          Prostitution          Female genital mutilation</p> <p><b>Night-time economies</b> – Brixton, Clapham, Vauxhall</p> <p><b>Preventing terrorism</b></p> <p><b>Neighbourhood crime</b>          Anti-social behaviour          Residential burglary</p> <p><b>Reducing adult re-offending</b></p>
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This comparison led to general questions of the adaptability of priorities to local circumstances – was this a one-size-fits-all plan for London which doesn't recognise differences in circumstances between boroughs? How would apparent differences between MOPAC priorities and local partnership priorities affect cohesion with the local partnership?

There were also specific concerns about omissions from priority crimes – ASB, drugs and drug related crime, hate crimes, youth issues and specific locality based needs eg on estates. At the same time, some queried whether the priorities chosen were crimes with which there already had been success and so there was confidence in making gains – but this de-prioritises more intractable problems.

That the priorities failed to address the causes of crime

The generalised conclusion from the responses to this question was that the Plan is a London wide plan for MOPAC and the MPS. It was not clear how the policing needs of individual boroughs, which are diverse, would reconcile with that.

**Question 2:**

Lambeth will get four extra police officers by 2015, against the number in 2011. More generally, the Plan will increase the number of Constables and reduce the relative number of officers in supervising roles (Sergeants and above), as well as moving officers out of specialist units and into neighbourhood policing.

What are your thoughts on this?

There was acknowledgement that Lambeth has, and would have the second highest number of officers after Westminster, but it was felt that the nature of the problems in the borough

justified this. It was noted that the base (2011) represented a substantial cut in the number of officers Lambeth has been accustomed to have over the past decade – generally well in excess of 900. Over the last five years, crime levels overall have been contained but there have not been reductions on the scale which are envisaged over just the next four years.

There was a consensus that the provision of officers projected would not be adequate.

In terms of the move to a flatter structure, there were real concerns expressed the plan did not reflect the risks of larger numbers of younger, less experienced officers on the street being subject to reduced levels of supervision and the consequences for community relations, especially in respect of the criminalisation of young people. There was recurrent emphasis that the plan should not just focus on what gets done but how it gets done. In particular the plan needs to address the training of less experienced officers in the skills of problem solving in the community – youth issues, conflict resolution, communications – and the importance of ‘attitude’.

Question 3:

Lambeth will retain one police station, Brixton, with a front counter open on a 24 hour basis, 7 days a week. Kennington and Streatham will have front counters with reduced hours, as yet unspecified. Front counters at other stations will close, but there will be other access at, for example, libraries, supermarkets or post offices, as yet unspecified. And the police will ‘come to you’.

What are your thoughts on this?

#### *Closures*

The proposal to close front counters/stations was viewed with concern. In part, this reflected the particular geography of Lambeth and the neighbouring boroughs and the ‘holes’ that would open up in the South of the borough (Gypsy Hill/Crystal Palace) and also in the East. It was argued that the plans need to be co-ordinated across borough boundaries.

It was also argued that police stations serve multiple purposes, as well as front desks, and that the retention of other functions would erode any apparent cost savings.

Police stations provide a place of safety in violent situations and have a role to play in public order – how is this to be addressed?

There was a general feeling that closures would inevitably have a negative impact on confidence.

#### *Alternative contact sites*

The proposals for alternative sites appear ill-thought through and sketchy in their presentation in the plan. People were not reassured that residents would know where the sites were and when they opened or that they would be secure in terms of confidentiality, IT systems and so forth.

*Contact through technology (phone, internet etc)*

Whilst some contributors felt that current contact numbers worked well for property crime, others cited examples of numbers not being answered, wrong numbers being publicised or failure of the police to get back to messages left. There was thus a lack of confidence in extending this form of reporting. More generally, there was agreement that contact in respect of some times of crime always required privacy and a confidential focus in the relationship between victim and police.

*The police come to you*

Examples were given of crimes – eg DV, ASB, gang related crime – where victims most certainly would not want the police to come to them.

Question 4:

The Plan proposes a Neighbourhood Policing Model where there will be a minimum of one warranted officer and one Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) in each ward, with larger teams of a neighbourhood police team serving clusters of wards.

What are your thoughts on this?

Contributors were not happy to move away from the current model as implemented under Operation Hannah in Lambeth. Specifically, it was felt that the numbers of officers and support officers proposed for each safer neighbourhood was simply too small to maintain a team-based interface with local communities, howsoever supported by a more diffuse cluster based resource. Contributors emphasised the importance of relationship building with local communities and that this had to be properly supported.

It was argued that the resilience, or otherwise, in the face of abstractions, rostering, leave etc., was not adequately addressed in the plan.

Some contributors felt that the shift in the balance of neighbourhood officers to larger teams covering bigger areas could result in a reduction in resource due to time spent travelling. There was also a concern that there was not sufficient recognition of what constitutes a neighbourhood – reference was made to the problems on some housing estates for example.

Question 5:

The Plan also sets a target to improve public confidence in policing by 20% and identifies a number of issues which impinge on this such as Community Engagement, Stop and Search, deaths in custody, Professional Standards and the ethnic diversity of the police service.

What do you feel the police need to do to increase public confidence and do you think the Plan adequately addresses the issue?

The plan is unclear how 'confidence' will be measured – by whom, and of whom? Surveys can be misleading not only in terms of the questions asked but also how they distinguish the different experiences of policing amongst different communities.

The impact of specialist, more confrontational styles of policing (eg TSG) on community confidence was underscored by the breakout groups yet this is barely acknowledged or addressed in the plan. This was related to the issue of 'how it's done' not 'what gets done' and it was felt that the plan should specifically address this, including education and training of officers perhaps by the community itself.

There was particular concern around Independent Custody Visiting and how that has developed and examples were given of the ways in which the independence of the visitors has been eroded. This was seen as damaging to confidence in itself but also as a harbinger of other changes in community-police relationships eg engagement.

The issue of diversity within the police service was emphasised as an important component of confidence building and the lack of a visible match between the service in Lambeth and the population served highlighted.

Question 6:

Were you able to attend the consultation MOPAC Roadshow on the Police and Crime Plan on January 9th at the Electric in Brixton? What did you think of the event on the night and the arrangements for it beforehand?

There was a widespread disappointment in the event. The key criticisms were:

There was inadequate notice of the event (Lambeth was the first venue) or notice of the content beforehand (papers were only sent out on the afternoon of the event). This meant that the attendance was not representative (particularly in terms of diversity, age, civil society) and attendees were ill prepared.

The time was too short for any meaningful exchange, particularly when almost half of the allotted time was given over to a Powerpoint presentation.

There was a feeling that there wasn't a fair and open access to questioning and some queried whether questions from the floor were cherry picked.

CPCG for Lambeth

March 2013