

Briefing Note – Full Council meeting

23 January 2018

Subject: Policing in Westminster

The purpose of this paper is to provide background and context to the debate at Full Council. It provides overview of the impending Borough Command Unit merger, concerns regarding policing in Westminster and provides a summary of new partnership working initiatives.

1. Context

- 1.1. The Mayor, and Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime have head the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) which serves as London's Police and Crime Commissioner. Operational policing for the Metropolitan Police Services (MPS) remains the responsibility of the Commissioner, Cressida Dick.
- 1.2. MOPAC is directly accountable for police performance in the capital, setting out strategic direction and allocating resources across London in its Police and Crime (P&C) Plan¹. The current plan was published in March 2017, includes measures to tackle these issues, reduce crime and disorder in London and improve police services across the city and outlines five top priorities in London:
 - A better police service for London
 - A better Criminal Justice Service for London
 - Keeping children and young people safe
 - Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls
 - Standing together against hatred and intolerance

In addition, a number of mandatory and local policing priorities are set. The mandatory high-harm crimes are sexual violence, domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, weapon-based crime and hate crime. For Westminster, the local priorities are anti-social behaviour, non-domestic violence with injury and robbery.

- 1.3. Each local authority area also has a statutory Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in place. Set up under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, CSP's ensure that public/responsible authorities "do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment) and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area".
- 1.4. The Police and Justice Act (2006) brought in further statutory requirements for Community Safety Partnerships and have been updated by subsequent legislation until the Crime and Disorder Regulations 2011. These include:
 - producing yearly Strategic Assessments and partnership plans
 - sharing information and have an Information Sharing Protocol
 - reporting on work and progress on a yearly basis
 - implementing a strategy to reduce reoffending
 - conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews in relation to incidents of domestic homicide

1.5. The Safer Westminster Partnership (SWP) is the statutory Community Safety Partnership for Westminster and is made up of representatives from the 'responsible authorities', which are:

- Metropolitan Police Service
- Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC)
- Westminster City Council
- London Fire Brigade
- Central London Commissioning Group
- National Probation Service
- Community Rehabilitation Company (MTC Novo)

1.6. The Safer Westminster Partnership has a three-year strategy from 2017/20, refreshed annually based upon evidence from the annual strategic assessment. The vision for the partnership is to ***Make Westminster safer by working in partnership to reduce the risk and harm of crime and anti-social behaviour, focusing on protecting the most vulnerable within our communities.***

2. Basic Command Unit Mergers

2.1. In 2017 the Metropolitan Police announced proposals to turn the 32 policing boroughs, aligned to local authority areas, into 12 Basic Command Units (BCU) under the Strengthening Local Policing (SLP) programme. These operate on the basis of five functional areas, aimed at driving consistency in the delivery of local policing across London:

- Emergency Response Teams – Trying to achieve greater efficiency through borderless deployment.
- Safer Neighbourhood Teams – Streamlined and ring-fenced team of dedicated ward officers.
- CID – Focus on serious and series crime from both reactive and proactive perspective.
- Safeguarding – Bringing together specialist and local delivery.
- BCU HQ – to provide a coherent support structure to deliver business continuity

2.2. This proposal formed part of a wider plan to reduce costs whilst also meeting increasing and more complex demands. The BCU changes are forecast to save £73.4 million alone, part of a wider MPS plan to save £400 million by 2021/22.

2.3. Westminster is to be part of a 'Central West' BCU along with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham. Originally proposed to go live in November 2018, the Central West BCU is now due to launch in February 2019 and is the last merger across the capital.

2.4. The merger will result in:

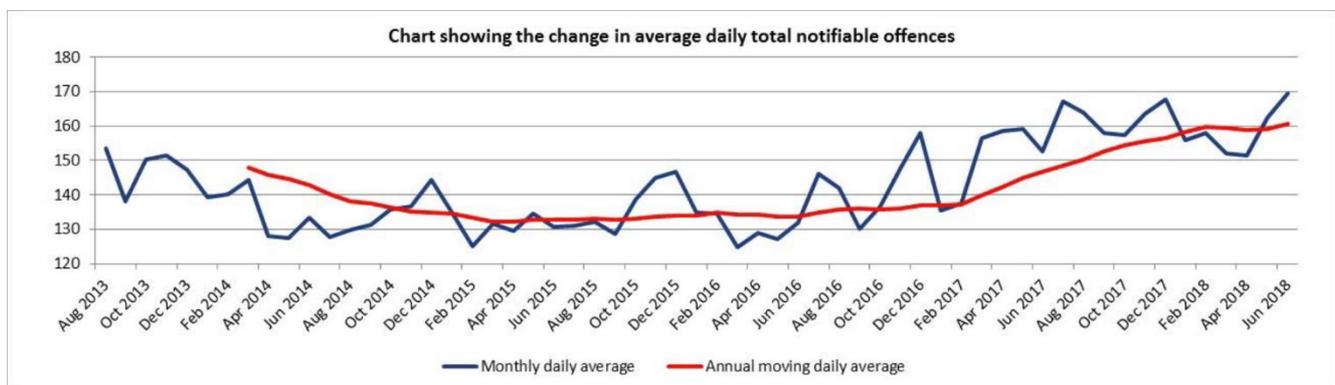
- A reduction in officers of 11.9%, a total of 243 officers across the three boroughs
- Neighbourhood policing will see a reduction of 42.2%, with 225 fewer officers
- Reductions in CID of 34.5% reduction, with 129 fewer officers
- Safeguarding will see a 19% increase in officers, 33 officers

- Emergency Response will see an increase of 4%, 38 officers – these officers will now also be responsible for investigating crimes
- 58 officers allocated to the new HQ function

3. Concerns

3.1. Whilst the City Council acknowledges the need to make significant savings and the potential benefits of cross border working, serious concerns remain regarding the capacity of MPS to deliver an effective policing service given the complexity, in terms of its size, demands and the uniqueness, of Westminster, against a backdrop of increasing levels of crime across Westminster.

3.2. Recent figures show that in 2018 crime in Westminster has increased by 10.1%. Westminster



now accounts for 7.5% of crime across London compared with 6.9% in 2017. There has been an increase in almost all crime types in this period, with the exception of theft of motor vehicles, which has seen a reduction as a result of Operation Venice that targeted the theft of mopeds, and moped enabled crime.

The chart below shows the monthly daily average of total notifiable offences over the past five years, that show an increase in long-term crime trends. The monthly daily average is used to take into account the varying number of days per month and an annual moving daily average is used to provide an overarching trend line.

3.3. Whilst the increase is most pronounced in the West End and St James’s wards, which now account for 4.1% of all crime in London, there have also been a number of concerning violent knife and gun enabled crimes in North Westminster over the last few months. Levels of community concern regarding these incidents and levels of anti-social behaviour in Church Street, Harrow Road and Queens Park are increasingly significantly. There is also a belief that low-level crime and disorder/anti-social behaviour, including drug dealing/taking and aggressive begging groups, are going unchecked and this is a very real concern not only in the West End but across Westminster in general.

4. Scrutiny and Lobbying

4.1. The subject of BCU merger has been considered by the City Management and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee on 21st November 2018.

4.2. The Leader, Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Licensing and officers have lobbied on numerous occasions to the Mayor of London, Deputy Mayor, the Commissioner and other senior officers within MPS regarding concern at both the proposed BCU and current levels of policing. Key concerns raised include:

- The current lack of visible policing and the ability to meet the unique demands of Westminster, in particular the West End and the evening and night-time economy
- The impact of the implementation of cross border policing on response times
- A loss in community confidence, increased levels of unreported crime and a reduction in community intelligence
- The impact of a reduction in police officer numbers at a time of increasing crime and demand
- Lack of understanding of local SNT's and dedicated ward officers and regularly changes within personnel which are not sufficiently communicated
- The Met's ability and capacity to deliver partnership working and strategic stakeholder and community engagement when working across three boroughs with a reduced management capacity
- Call response times on 101/999
- The impact on aide and abstractions – in particular in relation to policing events, demonstrations and set pieces like Changing of the Guard
- The lack of a co-ordinated approach between the Borough police team and central and specialist resources
- The reduction in sanction dedication rates
- The restriction on London residency and current vacancy levels
- A resultant impact on the ability to prevent of crime

5. Lobbying outcomes to date

5.1. As part of Westminster's response to the BCU proposals, a number of recommendations were made. These are summarised below:

- Lifting the restriction on new recruits having to live in London – Since our lobbying on this point the London residency restriction has been lifted temporarily for the next six months. It is understood that this is already having a positive impact on recruitment across the MPS
- Reducing abstraction (redeployment) of local officers for events. There is a commitment that Dedicated Ward Officers will not be abstracted, however, there is a concern that this may not be reflected in reality
- Increasing the number of Neighbourhood Police Officers across Westminster to ensure the Police remain proactive rather than a purely reactive service
- Increasing the number of officers in the West End and St James's and ensuring those officers working in the Evening and Night (ENT) are proactive rather than reactive. These areas have always accounted for the highest number of reported crimes in Westminster and recent increases are concerning. whilst a dedicated team will be put in place in the West End, overall remains a significant reduction of officers in this area coupled with a reduction in proactive policing overnight

6. Partnership working and integration

- 6.1. The City Council continues to work in partnership with the police and other agencies to play our part in ensuring the safety of our communities. In addition to our commissioned services and extensive preventative work, we are working to minimise the impact of these changes and where possible will innovate, commission and integrate services to reduce demand. However, the City Council cannot be expected, nor has the powers or finances, to fill a vacuum that a deficit in policing may create.

Examples of our partnership work in 2018 include:

Neighbourhood model

Public Protection & Licensing has recently moved to a neighbourhood model, allowing for provision of a more focused response to local issues, with dedicated multi-disciplinary teams. These teams align to the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT's) to ensure a partnership approach. Officers are also reviewing anti-social behaviour processes.

Violent crime task group

In response to growing concerns around youth violence, the Council established the Serious Youth Violence Officer Task Group to place a greater emphasis on how we can work together across Public Health and other Council departments, the police alongside partner agencies and the voluntary and community sector to adapt to the changing nature of violence. The Task Group looks at how we can better understand the drivers behind serious violence, in order to provide appropriate strategic and tactical responses, as well as empowering our communities to help reduce serious youth violence. A number of strands of work have been developed including engagement and consultation with hard to reach young people, training to staff to encourage young people to anonymously disclose concerns around serious youth violence and developing serious youth violence resources for parents which will be incorporated into current parenting programmes run across Westminster.

Integrated Gangs Unit

The Integrated Gangs Unit (IGU) has worked to reduce the impact of gang-related crime since 2011. Westminster's Integrated Gangs Unit consists of a wide range of agencies developed to respond to gangs and youth violence in Westminster. The team provides a whole systems approach through a variety of services including mental health, employment, dedicated gangs workers and a policing team. They work with vulnerable and exploited young people to steer them away from gang affiliation, however there is an enforcement approach as well.

Serious youth violence continues to be a priority in Westminster and across London, with media coverage highlighting the many serious youth violence incidents that have occurred across the capital. Throughout 2018, the IGU have worked with 115 young people and had an engagement rate of 85%. IGU have Supported 68.4% of their client group into work or training and issued 7 Criminal Behaviour Orders on gang members. There is crossover between the IGU caseload with other services provided to vulnerable children and young people, 30 percent of IGU clients have also received services from social workers in Family Services and the Youth Offending Service (YOS).

In November 2018, Westminster together with Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham, aligned to the new BCU, made a successful bid to the Early Youth Intervention Fund provided by the Home Office and administered through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). £500,000 was awarded over two years, and this funding will be used to bolster each borough's capacity to provide preventative outreach work including employing additional dedicated gang workers, a coordinator role will be introduced to assist in further engaging multi-agency networks across the three boroughs and Family Therapy Clinician will be funded to help the new workers embed systemic practice.

Additional funding from the community safety budget is also being used to include a community engagement officer role within the IGU to increase the capacity to deliver community based engagement with schools, parents and other community based groups.

Integrated Street Engagement Unit

The Integrated Street Engagement Unit was developed as part of the Leader's MyWestminster programme to bring together existing services including dedicated police officers, local charities and council officers to provide a more coordinated and comprehensive support package for our daytime street population. Launched in March 2018, the team has engaged with over 600 people on the street, signposting them to services including 102 who have been helped into housing and 144 referred for treatment for substance misuse or mental health issues.

Soho Angels

In partnership with the LGBT foundation, the Soho Angels and Night Hub scheme was launched in December providing specially trained volunteers to give dedicated support to those on a night out in Soho who might need help, support to get home or someone to talk to. The Soho Angels are designed to ensure London's nightlife remains a safe, inclusive and understanding space for all, as well as reducing the burden on the police and other emergency services. Soho Angels worked with almost 200 people over Christmas, many of whom required medical support from dedicated St John's Ambulance officers. Work is ongoing to roll out the scheme on Friday and Saturday nights from February 2019.

Oxford Street District Integrated Team

A pilot initiative has been launched in the New West End Company (NWECC) BID area to bring agencies together in a collaborative approach to improve the management of the area. This collective, comprises Metropolitan Police officers, Westminster Council city inspectors, homeless charity outreach workers and the New West End Company private security team, who will work together across the West End & Mayfair including Bond, Oxford and Regent Street. NWECC fund the City Councils City Inspectors. If the pilot is a success, the model could be rolled out to other areas across the City.

Ends.
