

Merton Safer Neighbourhood Board

Briefing 10th June 2026

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy Update

An update was provided on the borough's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, which was launched in February. The strategy focuses on tackling domestic abuse, sexual violence, forced marriage, honour-based abuse, modern slavery, sexual harassment, and rape. Five partnership priorities were highlighted: changing attitudes and behaviours; improving the safety of women and girls through initiatives such as Safe Havens, the Safer Business Network, and community-based activities; early identification of VAWG offences and appropriate support; strengthening support for victims, survivors, and their children through local and pan-London services; and holding perpetrators accountable through partnership work with policing and probation services.

Members were encouraged to consider whether their organisations had suitable venues that could become registered Safe Havens and to share details with the relevant team. Information was also provided about personal safety and domestic abuse support apps that can help users access support services and share their location safely with trusted contacts.

During the discussion, questions were raised about community activities linked to women's safety initiatives, including opportunities to expand participation and develop additional local groups. Information was provided on existing programmes and on how residents could establish similar initiatives within their communities. The process for businesses to become registered Safe Havens was also explained, with guidance available through the council's website.

The meeting also discussed awareness-raising and engagement with schools and colleges. An update was provided on ongoing outreach work, particularly within secondary schools and further education settings. Clarification was also given on how members of the public can identify legitimate Safe Havens, including the use of an online register and official window signage displayed by participating locations.

Stop and Search Monitoring Update – April 2026

An overview of stop and search activity during April 2026 was presented to the board. A total of 171 stop and searches were conducted during the month, representing a slight increase compared to the previous month. The data highlighted the ethnic breakdown of those stopped, with Black individuals accounting for a disproportionately high proportion of encounters when compared to the local population. This level of disproportionality

was above the average seen over the previous 12 months. Around one-fifth of all stop and searches involved individuals under the age of 18.

The most common reason for stop and search activity was suspected drug-related offences, followed by suspected weapons offences and other reasons. Approximately one-third of stop and search encounters resulted in a positive outcome, including arrests, community resolutions, fixed penalty notices, and other criminal justice outcomes. This positive outcome rate was reported to be lower than that seen in recent months.

The board also received an update on supervision arrangements for stop and search activity. The majority of encounters were reviewed by a supervising officer, with the proportion of unsupervised stop and searches showing an improvement compared to recent months, although it remained slightly above the average recorded over the previous year.

Members discussed the review process for stop and search encounters involving young people. An update was provided on a previously reviewed incident involving a child, which had undergone additional scrutiny due to the age of the individual involved. It was reported that the incident had been reviewed by appropriate supervisory teams and that no formal concerns had been identified. The importance of body-worn video use, supervisory oversight, and adherence to established procedures was emphasised during the discussion.

A further explanation was provided on what constitutes a high-quality stop and search encounter, including the use of body-worn video, supervisory review, and completion of post-incident assessments to ensure compliance with expected standards.

The meeting also noted that over the previous 12 months, more than 1,600 stop and searches had been carried out across the borough, with just over one-third leading to a criminal detection outcome. Ethnicity data recorded by officers was also presented as part of the ongoing monitoring and scrutiny process.

Safer Neighbourhood Board Funding Bids Update

An update was provided regarding the funding bid applications. It was noted that confirmation of the outcomes had not yet been received. Members were advised that details of the successful applications would be circulated to the board as soon as the information becomes available.

Metropolitan Police Update

An update was provided on recent changes within the Metropolitan Police, including the introduction of new officers who are expected to provide a more consistent local presence within communities. It was also reported that the borough is performing well in key areas, including crime reduction and public confidence, and is currently achieving strong levels of public trust compared with neighbouring areas.

During the discussion, members raised questions about neighbourhood policing structures and the allocation of resources across different wards. It was explained that policing arrangements are determined by local demand, crime patterns, and operational requirements, which can result in some areas receiving enhanced policing resources. Members also discussed the impact that changes in staffing and officer deployment can have on local policing effectiveness.

Concerns were raised regarding police visibility, the availability of female officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), and the ability of some residents to report sensitive issues comfortably. The importance of maintaining a diverse and accessible policing presence was highlighted.

The meeting also considered the potential impact of major housing developments and future population growth on policing demand. It was noted that current vacancy levels are low and that most policing posts across the borough are filled. However, it was explained that police resources must be balanced across London to respond to wider operational priorities, which can affect local deployment arrangements.

Neighbourhood Policing Update

An update was provided on recent neighbourhood policing activity, including a facial recognition operation that was reported to have been successful. Positive feedback had been received from members of the public, and the operation resulted in a number of positive policing outcomes.

Members discussed the enforcement of offences linked to the sale of illegal products and were advised that several investigations remain ongoing. It was noted that such investigations can take considerable time to progress through the legal process before outcomes can be confirmed.

The meeting also considered concerns regarding vehicle crime. Police representatives explained that reports of vehicle theft and attempted vehicle theft are closely monitored and mapped to identify trends and inform operational activity. Members were encouraged to report all incidents and suspicious activity, as this information helps build intelligence and supports targeted policing efforts. An update was provided on recent

proactive policing activity, which resulted in a number of arrests and the recovery of several stolen vehicles.

Concerns were also raised about anti-social behaviour linked to suspected drug use in residential areas. Police representatives advised that where specific locations can be identified, appropriate action may be considered.

Finally, a question was raised regarding a recently installed CCTV camera within the borough. It was agreed that further information would be sought and provided at a later date.

Any Other Business

Members discussed the impact of police station closures and the reduction in traditional community contact points for reporting local concerns. It was explained that members of the public should use the non-emergency 101 service to report incidents that do not require an immediate police response. The importance of reporting concerns was emphasised, as information received through these channels helps the police identify trends, understand community issues, and inform local policing priorities.

Any queries please contact: mark.robinson@merton.gov.uk

Next Meeting 10th June 2026