

Notes of **SOUTH CROYDON WARD PANEL**

Jubilee Room
St Paul's
Croham Park Avenue
South Croydon
CR2 7HF
Friday, 20 September 2024
7- 8.30pm

In attendance: Elizabeth Ash (Chair), Sergeant Aaron Bawden, PCSO Ketty Cannata, Peter Cox, Cllr Danielle Denton, Liz Gosling, Andrew Hargreaves, Judith Jones, Special Constable Colin Leggatt, PC Ciaran Quinn, PC Jack Stratton

Apologies: Lisa Broderick, George Cooper, Cllr Maria Gatland, Cllr Michael Neal, Brian Watkins

Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted. Andrew was welcomed as a new ward panel member and signed the ToRs, as did Peter Cox.

Notes of the last Meeting

The notes of the meeting on 1 March 2024 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising, not dealt with elsewhere in the meeting:

Public Space Protection Order – no update received from Cllr Neal regarding what is happening at the Council, following officers use of the PSPO, an action from the Nov 2023 meeting. Ward panel members noted how frustrating it must be for the officers if they're not aware of whether or not future action is taken, e.g. banning orders. **Action: EA to request an update.**

Ward team update

The team now have a full complement of officers, including Special Constable Leggatt. The new Inspector for the ward is Ryan Holliday.

Ward Panel Chair Update

The Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) has met and the Terms of Reference have been agreed. There is an outstanding concern around funding, with work ongoing to address this.

Some future SNB meetings, or part of the meetings, will be open to the public, offering another way for people to engage with and hear directly from local police.

Ward panel Discussion – Increasing representation and membership of the ward panel

The need to widen the reach and representation of the ward panel was reiterated, with this being promoted at Cuppa events, etc. It was hoped that two more people would join the ward panel.

It was clarified that anyone living, working or studying in the ward was eligible to join the ward panel.

A discussion was had about the ability for the ward panel to hold closed meetings and people were referred back to the ward panel handbook regarding the need to hold at least one open ward panel each year. Given the pressures on policing and with a number of potential or new ward panel members expected, it was explained that this meeting was planned as a closed meeting to allow the ward panel to whip through business to free up the team's time and to allow time to bring new ward panel members up to speed.

It was agreed that a mix of open and closed meetings was desirable.

A number of people indicated they had contacts interested in attending or joining the ward panel but the chair had not been informed, so people were asked to send on details asap to the chair. Had anyone indicated any interest they would have been invited. **Action: ALL**

Anyone can attend open ward panel meetings but it is helpful to know who is likely to attend to plan for numbers. It was helpful to be able to speak to people before they attend so they know to report issues as they happen, not hold onto them to raise at a ward panel, and that the ward panel focusses on the last three-month period covered by the stats, only on the ward concerned, and only on policing and safety issues, not council issues, for example.

PCSO Cannata asked that the chair pass on the contact details of the woman at the recent Cuppa event at the Sports Centre. EA agreed to do so, after gaining the person's consent. **Action: EA**

The team had asked the schools officers to see about a staff and or pupil rep from Harris Academy Purley but not heard. **Action: SNT** to chase.

Policing report and crime stats

The team continues to do a lot of engagement with schools, homes, nurseries and groups.

Stats were presented but only on a laptop due to printing issues. A copy of the stats was promised following the meeting, which the chair agreed to circulate. **Action: SNT/EA**

Key points discussed included:

Hot-spot areas were highlighted, including Ledbury Place, Ruskin Parade and and Haling Grove for various issues including ASB, drug-taking &/or dealing, loitering, begging. The issue of squatters in properties on the Brighton Road was also raised. Issues discussed included that properties secured are then broken into again and identifying who is responsible for a property has often been problematic.

Squatters seen in Aviation House should be reported as there is an order in force that they cannot return within 12 months.

The pressures on policing was discussed, with abstractions – where officers are pulled off regular duties such as neighbourhood policing – to police protests, demonstrations, large events or incidents such as the recent unrest. PCSO Cannata is the only protected police officer that cannot be abstracted.

Covering events such as football events was discussed, with examples shared of where officers have been posted or are rostered for duty, taking them off the ward.

The Chair advised that the ward panel chairs have written to Sir Mark Rowley due to concerns that the level of abstractions are severely affecting local policing teams' ability to deliver on the New Met for London's promise to deliver better Neighbourhood policing.

In response to a question the team explained that the Met is paid by organisations such as football clubs to police events.

Crime stats offered were explained. The gap in figures early on was due to the introduction of the new 'Connect' system not yet picking up figures from the older system. It was noted that crime figures had remained pretty constant. It was noted that robberies were down, Violence Against the Person was high but this is not remarkable due to the wide range of incidents that would be included, including minor issues and domestic incidents. The impact of football games on the stats was pointed out, with a spike in violence around the Euros.

The team explained that the stats did not reflect a lot of crime such a robberies using violence, but domestic violence incidents are on the increase across the country. In response to a question, sexual violence was noted as 2 incidents.

Stats for crimes in the ward for the past 30 days were also shared and discussed. The main categories were all relatively low. The ward panel noted these as being lower than in previous reports. The sergeant explained that the team was out as much as possible, dealing with issues.

The inclusion of year-on-year stats was requested and the team agreed to provide these to better help the ward panel to better inform the ward panel. **Action: SNT**

Winter crime – a rise in burglaries and theft often occurs around Diwali and Christmas and people were reminded to keep properties secured including gates, doors and windows.

Speeding is being addressed, and the team responds to reports, including those for Croham Road and Selsdon Road. Operations have resulted in people being caught for speeding, driving without a license and/or for drink-driving.

Other roads have been identified for speed operations. Avondale Road was suggested as an issue to be added.

An issue of Avon Path and vehicles parking there was discussed, with the police establishing whether or not this is a public road.

The team also agreed to look into SpeedWatch, where residents are trained to use speed guns on roads other than their own, due to a number being interested. **Action: SNT**

In response to a question, the team explained that speed cameras need not flash to take an image. Markings to ascertain speed of vehicle may be embedded under the road surface too so not visible.

Reporting, including of speeding, was still low and everyone was encouraged to keep spreading the word about people reporting issues as soon as possible via the various channels. See end of notes for details. **Action: ALL**

Ward issues

The following issues were discussed.

Haling Grove – Issues being addressed included school students loitering, setting fire to their school work and general ASB. A more collective approach to address the issue was suggested with local councillors keen to see the school more involved.

It was noted by an attendee that the issues in the area had improved with greater police presence so the team were thanked for this. The friends' group has assisted by cutting back bushes to give better sightlines and avoid places for groups to hide or congregate out of sight.

Dog-related incidents have been an issue, including one very serious incident involving a dog that the owner handed over to police following the incident, due to its severity. Concern re dogs off leads in the park and accessing gardens where small children play was noted at a recent Cuppa event, with the person concerned encouraged to report any issues and to encourage others to do so.

There was some concern expressed by ward panel members that dedicated Schools' Officers may be moved onto local policing teams but the team were not able to confirm that this was the case. Due to the level of concern about this, the team was asked to keep the Chair up to date on this and any other changes so that the ward panel can be notified. **Action: SNT/EA**

The police Cadets' scheme has also recently been reduced to limit the range of ages accepted down to just 13-17 year olds, cap the number to 45 per borough and to restrict the activities covered to those purely focussed on policing.

Comments made by those attending were that this seemed very short-sighted, likely to reduce the appeal and reach of the scheme, including harder to reach communities, and limit the valuable skills and experiences on offer. The range of activities will have been a draw and will also have offered useful transferrable life and team-building skills.

Ward panel to consider writing regarding this, perhaps after details of other changes are confirmed or denied. **Action: EA/ward panel**

Stop and Search – In response to questions the team explained that they were trained for stop and search. They were happy to use these powers. For example, after engaging with a group or individual, they were not satisfied with the responses given, this gave them grounds to stop and search. Drugs are more frequently found than knives, and a number of searches result in nothing found.

Thefts from school children – The back to school plan put in place by Croydon police had been effective at addressing issues. A copy of Superintendent Mitch Carr's communication regarding this and other matters was shared at the meeting. View it [here](#). Action: EA to circulate via email.

In discussions of this update, the team explained that there were reports of rogue trading in small independents. Branded items e.g. Co-Op, Tesco, M&S, Sainsburys have been seized in some shops in Croydon. This also saw items of alcohol seized. People were advised to report other incidents, if seen. A licensing visit can then be undertaken to check if the outlet has the paperwork to back up their ability to legally sell these items. Action: ALL

Avon Path – a ward panel member reported a bollard being put in place but removed very quickly and laid to one side. This was not thought to be put in by the council but the council were patrolling the area more regularly to enforce parking infringements. Activities here lead to people feeling unsafe. People were reminded that they can report where they feel unsafe – poor lighting, ASB, people congregating, overgrowth obscuring view and light, etc, via [Streetsafe](#). Reports are used so police can address issues by working with the council, etc. where appropriate.

Ledbury Place – this is an ongoing issue – ASB, people loitering, potential drug dealing/taking, squatting. Police have been liaising with Alphonso, the ASB lead at the council. Property owners have been canvassed about funding putting in pedestrian/vehicle gates either end to limit access to key/code/fob holders only. A cost is being sought for this from suitable contractors before people will commit to this as property/business owners will need to cover the cost as this will not be funded by the council or police. It would, hopefully, address the issues here.

Ward Priorities

Current priority, set by the team, remains:

1. Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) – This is a Met-wide priority.

The panel were advised that the term VAWG now covers men and boys, not just women and girls.

The ward panel agreed to three priorities:

2. Continued community engagement

The team have done particularly well on this and the ward panel would like to see this success built on.

3. ASB in open spaces - including parks and South End
4. Speeding – speed operations and SpeedWatch

Community Contact Sessions

Cuppa with a Copper sessions were discussed. Issues around people attending understanding the event related to the ward of South Croydon, not the postal area was noted as an issue. This has been addressed in publicity by making this explicit.

Ward Survey – due to go out soon and could ask for feedback on Cuppa events. Action: SNT

A Street a Week – This scheme was also explained, where a street each week is visited to engage residents and/or businesses via door knocking, to deliver crime prevention advice, explain how to report, to sign up to the SNT ward newsletter, invite people to join the ward panel or come to a Cuppa with a Copper event etc. This includes engaging roads with no reports of incidents as they do not receive visits due to reports of crime.

The ward panel felt this was a really positive initiative, building further on the engagement done for neighbouring properties when a crime occurs. Having a full compliment of officers has enabled this.

Any Other Business

PC Stratton shared that he has organised a borough-wide event at Royal Russell School, working with SC Leggatt. 10 schools have been invited to bring teams of Year 6 students to take part in a football tournament. Crystal Palace are also involved in this initiative.

Date of Next Meeting:

Provisional dates agreed as Friday 29 Nov or Thurs 5 Dec 2024. **Action: EA** to book

People were reminded that they can contact the chair at any time before the meeting if they have issues, questions or items for the agenda. CroydonNeighbourhoods@gmail.com

Meeting closed: 8.15pm

Notes: EA

How to report

Report by calling 101 or report online on the [Met Police website](#).

In an emergency or where a serious crime is in progress, call 999. Response teams are deployed, even if the local team are not on duty.

[Crimestoppers](#) can be used to report if the person reporting wishes to remain anonymous.

The ward email can be used to contact the team but this will not be logged in the same way so it is important to use the main reporting channels above. The team will only pick up emails when on duty. They work different shift patterns and days to cover the ward at different times. The team's email is SNMailbox.SouthCroydonSNT@met.police.uk