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My Ref:

23rd January, 2013

Stephen Greenhalgh
Deputy Mayor for Policing & Crime
Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Councillor Lewis Robinson
Conservative Member for College Ward
Leader of the Conservative Group

The Members' Room
Southwark Town Hall
160 Tooley Street
London, SE1 2QH

Dear Stephen,

MOPAC Consultation – Southwark

First of all may we say thank you to you, MOPAC and the Met Police for the engagement currently happening over the proposed reforms.

We recognise what an extremely challenging target you are setting by aiming to continue to reduce crime across London whilst at the same time facing a reduction in money from the Government to pay for it of 20%. Something like this cannot be achieved by simply trimming existing budgets, it requires a radical reappraisal of the way the Met Police operates. It was Assistant Commissioner Simon Byrne at the public consultation meeting for Southwark who acknowledged that there are police forces across the country with much better records and there need to be major changes in the way the Met operates if it is to catch up with the best.

There can be no doubt that your broad aim of freeing up resources associated with not fit for purpose buildings in order to increase the number of police available to fight crime is the right strategy.

There is of course a trade off in this approach in that fewer buildings mean;

- 1) Fewer access points ("counter services") for the public to report crime,
- 2) Fewer mustering points for Police to sign on and off and have their breaks,
- 3) An increased pressure to move away from the ward based Safer Neighbourhood model.

As far as the counter service is concerned you rightly point out that the ways people report crime and the ways the Police respond to contacts from the public are changing. The internet and the very successful 101 telephone number are both reducing the need for members of the public to go to a Police station. Added to this is the Police's commitment to meet members of the public at a time and venue (for instance at home or at their place of work) of their choice. This is all reducing the need for a counter service in the traditional sense.

You reiterated the Mayor's commitment that where a traditional counter service is being withdrawn it will be replaced with an equivalent or better new type of counter service/public access in the area. At the consultation meeting you encouraged people to be imaginative and coincidentally the Evening Standard that day led with the idea of meeting the Police in Post Offices!

You are now consulting on the proposals drafted by the Met, in the case of Southwark it is the newly appointed Borough Commander John Sutherland who is taking the lead. Commander Sutherland is new and therefore much of the work must have been done before his appointment, so we don't know if he is as surprised as we are that the proposal makes no reference to the Mayor's commitment on counter services and how he proposes to meet it. We also assume Commander Sutherland's repeated assertion that any additional changes to the budget must be at no cost/free is an opening negotiating position, otherwise it significantly diminishes the value of the consultation.

The budget for Southwark is based on just 4 operational centres to cover the 21 Safer Neighbourhood ward teams. In the case of College, Village and East Dulwich this means, we understand, moving from the closing East Dulwich station on Lordship Lane over the hill to Camberwell station. Commander Sutherland believes this meets his two criteria of economic efficiency and effective policing.

You were aware before the meeting of the level of dissatisfaction about this and also that alternative plans have been brought forward to reinstate a presence in the south of the borough. We can all agree that the meeting itself was dominated by politicians and members of the public highlighting the Dulwich issue. Assistant Commissioner Byrne was very clear at one point when he expressed the view that there was an issue here which required a serious review.

We shall not rehearse at length here the arguments about geographical distance and poor public transport. It may be worth noting that since the meeting we have had confirmed to us that there is only one police car routinely available to the 3 wards teams and therefore public transport will be the default position for most officers most of the time. We do not believe this is an effective use of police time.

As we say there is already a plan on the table to use the gatehouse at the Dulwich Hospital site as both a counter service and mustering point for Dulwich. We fully support this proposal and urge you to incorporate it into the Southwark police budget, and nothing we say elsewhere in this letter should detract from that.

You ask us to be imaginative in our response. There is no requirement for the 2 challenges of counter services and a local mustering point being solved by the same location. At the public meeting you floated the idea of co-locating services with Southwark Council. I hope you and Cllr Peter John can work together positively on this.

Some ideas which could be considered include;

1. Basing the College Ward SNT at the Seeley Drive building, which Commander Sutherland has stated publically will be maintained, and indeed also that this will serve as their operational base. Due to the particular geography of College Ward, and the lease with the Council who own the property, the retention of this base is now taken as a given, which has been welcomed by all parties.

2. The Council has mobile vehicles which it takes to estates for housing surgeries, consideration should be given to adding Police surgeries as part of the service.
3. A fixed point from where it may be possible for a counter service to be provided is the Dulwich Library at the Plough, Lordship Lane. A new library is proposed for Grove Vale and a police appropriate facility could also be designed into that.
4. Formalised arrangements could be put in place for the Police to have meal breaks in the local schools or have access to tenants' halls. Indeed there is a small tenants' hall on the Council's East Dulwich Grove Estate near Dulwich Hospital which may be suitable for an occasional counter service operation.
5. Another potential mustering point is the Francis Peek Centre in Dulwich Park, where the local parks service is based, or Rosebery Lodge is also underused but it may require access directly from the South Circular.

As you can see we are keen to be supportive in producing the best possible policing model for Southwark. We have not had the opportunity to fully scrutinise the Southwark policing budget but even in these straitened times it should be possible to re-jig it to find no more than £50,000 for a mustering point in Dulwich, especially if there is positive and pro active engagement from the leadership of Southwark Council to achieve this.

Yours ever,



COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON

and on behalf of;

COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERLSLEY (Village Ward)

COUNCILLOR MICHAEL MITCHELL (Village Ward)