



**Sian Berry AM**  
**City Hall**  
**The Queen's Walk**  
**LONDON SE1 2AA**

To Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing  
Via email, [Sophie.Linden@mopac.london.gov.uk](mailto:Sophie.Linden@mopac.london.gov.uk)

13 August 2020

Dear Sophie,

**Lack of community policing in Richmond borough**

A constituent has alerted me to a rise in crime, social problems and Anti-Social Behaviour in the borough of Richmond as lockdown has eased. The issues they have noted include:

- Drug dealing and drug taking (with one reported death from an overdose).
- An increase in assault and fights (with one reported death).
- Increased reports of weapon finds, in particular knives (as evidenced in Met and Parks Police reports).
- More people rough sleeping, particularly in shop doorways.
- Speeding and dangerous or drunk driving around the Green.
- Graffiti and vandalism on the Riverside and the Old Palace walls on Richmond Green
- Car thefts and break-ins, especially in the Friars Lane car park.
- Urination and defecation throughout the area. With aggression shown to neighbours when challenged.

The current crime rate in South Richmond Ward, which covers Richmond Town, Green and the Riverside, highlights the impact of the lack of police in the borough. July saw 11 crimes per 1,000 residents, almost twice that of the borough average and almost a third higher than the rest of London.<sup>1</sup>

In response, the South West BCU has instigated dispersal orders covering Old Deer Park, Richmond Green and Richmond Town Centre for 14-17 July and at Teddington Lock for 7-9 August.<sup>2,3</sup> While the dispersal orders may have had the desired effect during those times, the same residents tell me that in some cases the people moved elsewhere, or just came back later: "During Dispersal Orders the Met are clearing the Riverside, but then vacating the area. Revellers remaining in the area then wreak havoc on the Green into the night once

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/a/your-area/met/richmond-upon-thames/south-richmond/?tab=Overview>

<sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/MPSRichmond/status/1283670922495483904?s=20>

<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/MPSTeddington/status/1291721723432316929?s=20>

presence gone. One car reported to 101 was left to desecrate the Green on Friday driving handbrake turns on the grass at 1am.”

I am very concerned that the 53 per cent reduction in police numbers across the South West Base Command Unit between 2016 and 2019 is having a detrimental effect on the ability of local police teams to engage in community policing to prevent these kinds of issues emerging and then getting worse. Added to the impact of borough mergers, the police station in Richmond Town Centre was closed as part of cost-cutting measures in 2018 meaning the nearest staffed police station is across the Thames in Twickenham. Currently, this station is closed for refurbishment.

To make up for the loss of policing in Richmond town centre, Be Richmond – the Richmond Business Improvement District organisation – has resorted to employing private security on Thursdays and Fridays, between 12noon-8pm and on Saturdays between 2-10pm<sup>4</sup>.

Given this situation, I am writing to urge you to discuss these issues with the South West BCU leadership and ask them to look at increasing police numbers in Richmond Borough and bringing back a staffed police station to the town centre.

More focus on community policing would help to reduce these crime rates, with particular impact on lower level problems, such as graffiti and vandalism, while also acting as deterrent for more serious criminal behaviour on the streets that has been outlined above. People who are sleeping rough on the high street could also receive more advice and care, with police officers directing them to suitable local services and protecting them from physical harm.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sian Berry', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Sian Berry**  
**Green Party Member of the London Assembly**

Cc Tony Arbour, AM

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<sup>4</sup> <https://berichmond.london/street-security-team/>