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Ref: Law and Order eUpdate 10/2: local issues
Please quote reference on all correspondence

I have recently met with the Metropolitan Police Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Steve Kavanagh, and I thought you would appreciate a report back on some of the issues that we discussed.

Anti-Social behaviour

I am aware that in parts of the constituency, anti-social behaviour has been rather more persistent than the average nuisance this causes. I particularly drew the attention of the Borough Commander to the following concerns, raised by local people with me.

Welsh Harp Village: The Borough Commander reports to me, that in the last month, there have been twelve arrests, including three for graffiti offences. Four “acceptable behaviour contracts” are being arranged.

Glengall Road: I particularly highlighted the problems in Glengall Road, which seem in large part to emanate from the off-licence. The Council is at last considering CCTV after so much repeated pressure from residents and myself, but this is likely to be up to a year away. I have asked the police to pay particular attention to this area, and with special reference to their patrolling times.

North Road Estate: It was clear from my recent visit to the estate, that there seems to be a growing problem of anti-social behaviour on the North Road Estate and I have asked the police to investigate and act on this.

Deansbrook Road: This has also been a long-running problem which I again brought to the Borough Commander’s attention. Some of those convicted and sentenced to community sentences under the “payback” scheme have been involved in cleaning off graffiti in the area. Police are also promoting youth activities through the “Zest” project.

Edgware: Car break-ins

I have been concerned about the incidence of car break-ins in the Edgware area, though the official reported figures seem to be rather fewer than residents have told me about. It is important that these offences are reported, as it helps the police build up a profile of the crime pattern, an important aid to tracking down those responsible. The police are involved in proactive activities to catch those involved, including “decoy” vehicles, but for obvious reasons I do not wish to go into the detail of their operation.

New licensing powers

The police are very appreciative of the new licensing powers which came into force with the new Licensing Act. The fears of some that this would lead to 24 hour drinking have not proved correct, and the new powers are being used proactively by the police, particularly to target the 10 worst offending licensed premises in the Borough. They are particularly focusing on problems of violence and under-age customers. Each of the problem businesses is being visited at least twice per month by the police to spot check compliance with the law.

Burglaries

A gang appears to be targeting Jewish community homes in Hendon and Edgware. The police are aware of this and have given very strong advice to the community. Considerable support is being given from the centre, at Scotland Yard, through additional patrols through the territorial support group, and also additional detective officers. Further details are given in my Jewish community reports. I am attaching to this report, the police's general advice, to reduce the risk of burglary.

Safer Neighbourhood Teams

These are fully staffed for every ward in the Borough, with a sergeant, two police constables and six police community support officers. Some teams have eight PCSOs at present. Barnet was the first Borough in the Metropolitan Police to be awarded an "excellent" rating from the Metropolitan Police inspectorate, for its Safer Neighbourhood Team work. The Borough SNT also received a Commissioner's commendation for its crime reduction activities in 2006/7.

One issue which I have raised with the Borough Commander is whether sticking to the Council ward boundaries results in the most effective policing. Around the "edges" of some of the wards, what would appear to be natural policing boundaries do not coincide with the ward administrative boundaries, so I have asked the police to consider whether some minor adjustments might provide for more effective patrolling, though of course neighbouring SNTs do coordinate closely.

Safer Neighbourhood Teams: transport

The new team dedicated to patrolling the transport network is now fully staffed, comprising eighteen PCSOs, two sergeants and two police constables. They have been aligned to the Safer Neighbourhood Teams based on the wards. They are particularly targeting transport hubs such as Edgware bus station and Tally Ho bus station. Although they are fully in operation, the team will be officially launched on 1st July.

Pick pocketing

There appears to have been an increase in pick pocketing from a gang which has moved from Camden, and who appear to be very organised. This is also a major problem in the Borough of Enfield. They are operating in main shopping areas and transport hubs, so please be warned! The police are aware of this and taking action to catch them.

Emergency response times

I have received a number of complaints about poor response times to telephone calls, from the police. The Borough Commander is aware of this, and is working to try and resolve this. Incoming calls to the police are graded either “immediate” or “standard”, and one of the issues is not just how quickly a call is taken, but how it is assigned between the two categories. The Borough Commander is working with the Metropolitan Police call handling centre (which is actually on the Police Training College site in Colindale) to resolve this issue.

There was also a short term problem contributing to the unsatisfactory response times, due to the maintenance contract for the police area cars, which are the fast response vehicles to emergencies.

The Borough Commander accepts that response times are “not as good as they should be”, and is taking this complaint very seriously.

Distraction burglary

This was a problem particularly last year. This crime involves criminals going door to door, pretending for example to be salesmen or from utility companies, and conning their way into homes, particularly of the elderly. After the “surge” last year, this problem seems to have eased off.

Crime statistics

The crime statistics continue to look pretty good for the Borough. For the financial year 2006/7, there was a 16% reduction, overall. So far this year, there has been a further reduction of 13.7% on top of that. The Borough Commander feels that these figures are exceptional and is very cautious in predicting the sustainability of this continuing reduction rate, though it is obviously very good news.

There have been some 400 crimes fewer already this financial year, compared to this time last year.

For the year to date, street robbery (mugging) is down 5%; sanctioned detection (ie the perpetrators caught and dealt with) is up by 27%.

Theft from motor vehicles is down 23% and of motor vehicles down 27%, though as indicated above there appears to have been particular problems in Edgware.

Criminal damage is down 21%, and serious wounding down 20%.

On a less satisfactory note, gun crime has doubled, though this is still a very small absolute number, increasing from 11 to 22 over the year. This is very worrying, when linked to the sort of serious burglaries to which I have referred above.

Burglary is also up 25%.

The police have a special action plan to deal with this increase in burglary, with special night duty operations currently underway.

I hope that you find this brief update of assistance.

Overall, despite one or two “blips”, the general story continues to be very positive. I work closely with the police at the strategic level with the Borough Commander, particularly when I can identify major trends from the correspondence and comments I receive from people as I go round the constituency; and I also work closely at the “grass roots” with the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, being in regular contact with the sergeants to discuss very local policing priorities, too.

If there are any issues that you would particularly like me to bring to the attention either of the Borough Commander or the local Safer Neighbourhood Team for your area, please do not hesitate to get in touch.