

Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Report Title	INFORMATION REPORT: Public access – police station changes
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Lateness: This report was not available for the original dispatch due to the date the agenda for the committee meeting was agreed.

Urgency: This report cannot wait until the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as this will not take place until 8 March 2018 and the information included in the report will be out of date.

1.0 **Background:**

Following the report published by MOPAC as a result of the recent public consultation on the Public Access and Engagement Strategy this paper details the front counter provision for Lewisham.

For some time MOPAC and the Police have been speaking to the public and asking them how they want to access services. The feedback includes that they need to be able to contact police in a way that's flexible and more convenient to them, few people now visit a front counter with just eight percent of crime now reported there. It is clear police services need to be more accessible and enhance engagement whilst enabling police to focus resources where they're most needed. By closing around 30 of the most underused buildings the Police could save around £10 million in running costs a year. The Police would also raise around £170 million to spend on improving the technology that enables officers to remain out in their communities, and improve the retained buildings. This will allow the Police to deliver the Government's funding cuts without cutting deeper into the front line

Responses were received through an online survey, email, post and at public meetings held in every Borough. Around 2,600 people and organisations responded via the survey, email and post, and around 1,500 people attended the public meetings.

There's no question that these have been difficult decisions to make, and police recognise and have considered the concerns of residents who have taken part in the consultation process to share their views.

This paper aims to

- To inform which of the current front counters closed / have changes.
- To reassure of the many ways in which communities can engage with police.
- To provide an update on the Dedicated Ward Officer (DWO) hubs

2.0 The way the public want to contact the police is changing

There's a demand to access services digitally due to the added convenience and flexibility.

At 22 of current front counters staffed by Public Access Officers (PAO's) one or less crime reports were made a day.

Redesigning services to be focused on what people want and need, so services are more accessible, enhance engagement, and make the best use of digital technology.

The Polices' ambition is to ensure the experience of connecting with police through digital channels will be as helpful, personal and reassuring as approaching an officer on the street.

Already seeing the reach of digital channels

- 70 percent of crimes are reported on the phone. Three-quarters are to the non-emergency number 101, launched in 2011.
- 5,000 Twitter enquiries have been dealt with by MetCC, which includes serious crime, since the unpublicised launch of Digital 101 in July 2016.
- 300 online crime reports are dealt with by MetCC daily.
- 350 online enquiries are dealt with by MetCC daily.
- The demand for reporting crime and engaging with police digitally is expected to increase.

Options for people without internet access

London remains the region with the highest proportion of recent internet users in 2017, with 93 percent of Londoners having used the internet in the last three months, and nationally the use of the internet by older people is on the increase [Source: Office of National Statistics]. Evidence shows that 95 percent of Londoners with internet access are open to accessing any part of our service online [Source: MediaCom (2016) Testing a new Met Police digital platform].

The Telephone and Digital Investigation Unit launched in September to deal with a significantly higher volume of reports and initial investigations. This will provide a far quicker service for people reporting over the phone and online, and will ensure that the front line are able to focus on priority crimes and helping those most in need of our help.

Early figures show very little difference in uptake of online crime reporting across age groups.

The ambition is to have digital access points at our remaining front counters for anyone without internet access at home.

There is also the option to access the internet at a local library.

Anyone who needs a police officer can request one to attend.

3.0 Visibility of police in the community is also increasing

There are already in place two dedicated ward officers (DWOs) and one PCSO for each ward, who know and are known to the communities they serve.

Equipping officers with mobile technology will bring reporting services to the playground, at the shopping centre, wherever it's convenient for the public. DWOs will have new 'hubs' (or back offices) based in their wards where they can change and pick up items needed before heading out on duty, rather than waste time returning to a police station.

DWOs will hold a minimum of a one hour community contact session per week per ward, for those members of the community preferring face-to-face contact. For wards identified as having over 60 minutes travel time to the nearest front counter, an enhanced session will be held twice a week at a Safer Neighbourhood base or fixed place.

4.0 The future of police stations

There will be one 24 hour front counter per borough, for us it is Lewisham Station.

Public Access Officers (PAO) provide a valuable role and will work from where they're needed most with access to the tools to help them manage demand, such as digital access points in police station foyers to make reporting quicker.

Up to 25 of the remaining stations will be updated based on current conditions to improve facilities and the environment for staff and the public.

Police are looking for opportunities to share facilities with emergency services partners.

5.0 Dedicated ward officer hubs

Where there is not a police building on or within close proximity to a DWO's ward, we'll be creating additional 'hubs' for them – small back offices where they can pick up their kit - to enable them to spend more time in the communities they police.

These new hubs will be created at locations that supports community policing. All Borough Commanders will be engaging with their local communities to identify suitable locations.

The hubs will be accessible 24/7 and located either within existing Met buildings or suitable partnership buildings, such as with: Blue Light partners; local authorities; hospitals; or with commercial services where there's an appropriate relationship.

Borough Commanders will take into consideration DWOs existing collaborations with partner agencies and their safer neighbourhood colleagues when assessing locations, as well as specific local requirements. Safer Neighbourhood bases will not close until a suitable alternative DWO hub is in place, unless exceptional circumstances arose (such as notice was given by a landlord).

Over the next 3 years 150 hubs will be rolled out.

DWOs and PCSOs are dedicated to building relationships and getting to know the people and the area they serve, working alongside a dedicated community officer. All will be fully mobile and issued with tablets to enable them to operate throughout the community and report crimes immediately whilst in the community.

There will be 1,258 DWOs working across the capital, with a clear commitment that they may only be abstracted for other duties outside their ward for the high-demand events, such as Notting Hill Carnival and New Year's Eve, and any exceptional circumstances that London faces.

6.0 There are many options for people to access police services:

- Police have redesigned their digital services, with the public now able to do much more online such as report a crime or get a response through Twitter.

- Police have enhanced their telephone services so crime can be reported and initially investigated over the phone, with live call transfer coming to the 101 call centre (MetCC) to further speed up the process.
- Officers will be equipped with the mobile technology to bring services to the public, enabling them to be more visible in the community.
- By the end of 2017, every London ward will have two dedicated ward officers and one PCSO.
- Contact sessions will be run in wards so the public can report crime, get crime prevention information and other advice.
- A 24 hour front counter will be available in each borough with enhanced digital facilities to enable a more efficient service.
- Where there is not a police building on or within close proximity to a Dedicated Ward Officers' (DWO) ward, police will create additional 'hubs' to enable officers to remain out in the communities they police at locations that support operational policing.

6.0 For Lewisham

There was a public consultation meeting held on the 26th September 2017 through the Safer Neighbourhood Board structures. This was attended by MOPAC and the borough commander. The main issues raised from the public included:

- Where would local police teams be based
- Making contact easier ie improving the website/ providing better contact numbers for neighbourhood teams
- Could there be input on where the hubs might be located

Front counters: the 24/7 front counter will remain at Lewisham Police Station.

The front counters at Catford and Deptford closed in **December**. The rest of the building at Catford will subsequently be disposed of, but the rest of the building at Deptford will be retained. Signage has been put in place detailing alternative 24/7 front counter addresses and there is a working phone outside Catford station providing 999 and 101 options. There have been no complaints or issues raised since the changes and closure.

Making these changes in Lewisham will save the Met more than £260k per year – the equivalent of five police constables.

7.0 Introduction of Community Contact Sessions

The London wide Public Consultation raised a number of key concerns;

- Would the loss of a police station or front counter equate to the loss of a police presence in the immediate community?
- Would such closures result in a lack of face to face contact with MPS officers?
- With the closures, how far would Londoners have to travel in order to visit a Police Station?

To answer these concerns, Community Contact Sessions will be introduced from January 2018. They will be an opportunity for members of the community who prefer face-to-face contact, to sit and speak with a Dedicated Ward Officer (DWO).

At each Community Contact Session members of the public will be able to report crime, receive crime prevention advice and be signposted to other MPS services or the services offered by partner agencies. Community Contact Sessions can take the form of; Street Briefings, Surgeries, Cuppa with a Copper, community events or property marking sessions. The effectiveness of these sessions will be monitored.

8.0 How Often Will The Community Contact Sessions Be Held?

There will be two types of Community Contact Sessions;

TYPE 1 – STANDARD COMMUNITY CONTACT SESSION

These Community Contact Sessions will take place at least once per week for at least an hour in every ward across London starting in January 2018.

DWO's will recommend the dates, times and location of each Contact Session, consulting with Ward Panels and Safer Neighbourhood Boards. Sessions could for example be held at iconic sites or those with a high footfall, in response to an increase in a particular crime type or community concern or in conjunction with events held by partners. The Community Contact Sessions will be advertised in advance locally on the ward Twitter & Facebook pages, as well as on local forums and in key community locations such as libraries & leisure centres.

TYPE 2 – ENHANCED COMMUNITY CONTACT SESSION

Due to the distance from these communities to the nearest Police Station front counter, DWO's will be asked to conduct two sessions a week for at least an hour, on ONE WARD in or near these communities.

As opposed to Standard sessions these dates, times & locations will be fixed – each session will be at a specific venue, at a specified date/times, starting from January 2018.

DWO's will recommend the dates, times and location of each Contact Session, consulting with Ward Panels and Safer Neighbourhood Boards.

Sessions could for example be held at iconic sites or those with a high footfall, in response to an increase in a particular crime type or community concern or in conjunction with events held by partners.

The Community Contact Sessions will be advertised in advance locally on the ward Twitter & Facebook pages, as well as on local forums and in key community locations such as libraries & leisure centres.

9.0 How Will I Know When My Community Contact Session Will Take Place?

Dedicated Ward Officers will advertise the dates, times and locations of all Community Contact Sessions across a number of platforms including;

- TWITTER
- FACEBOOK
- Library / Community Notice Boards
- Neighbourhood Pages on MPS Website
- Safer Neighbourhood Board Meetings
- Ward Panel Meetings

The Borough Commander and Senior Leadership team are happy to meet and discuss any of these changes

For further details please contact Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, Head of Public Protection and Safety , 0208 314 9569.