

**Notes on the public meeting with Det Ch Sup Catherine Roper (Borough Commander)
Arranged by Camden Conservative Councillors**

September 14th 2017 At St Stephen's Church, Haverstock Hill

Presenting:

Claire-Louise Leyland
Leila Roy
Jonny Bucknall

From the Met:

Catherine Roper, Detective Chief Superintendent, Camden's Borough Commander
Richard Burns, Inspector, Camden Neighbourhoods
John Pascal Barbe, Detective Sergeant, Operation Attrition

Claire-Louise Leyland welcomed and introduced Det Ch Sup Catherine Roper, who is the Borough Commander of the combined area of Camden and Islington under the new Pathway Scheme that has summer about the impact of moped crime on their lives. CLL explained the work that she has been doing with London Councils, GLA and the Home Office to try to address this scourge. She noted that it's clear from these discussions that moped crime is a complex issue – criminal motivation, legislation and the guidance given to police about pursuit seem to play a role, vehicle security, insurance and how owners look after their mopeds are also factors. CLL recounted two contrasting stories that had taken place in Camden recently - one of successful policing, responsive leading to prosecution; and another where a crime was not pursued, despite considerable information being provided by the resident.

Catherine Roper welcomed the invitation to attend a public meeting and introduced her team - Richard Burns, the Inspector in charge of Camden Neighbourhoods, and John Pascal Barbe, a Detective Sergeant with Operation Attrition. She set out a clear statement about the area that falls into Camden and Islington and her view that within this area, it should be a resident's right to go about unchallenged by criminals. CR expanded on the new 'Pathfinder' model arrangements, the approach to policing, and the structure and policy of the service under her. She noted that the numbers of officers under the new structure has remained the same as before – we have 1213.4 officers across Camden and Islington. Previously there were two superintendents in each borough, each in charge of the two strands of the detective and the uniformed sections. In the new combined arrangement there are four superintendents in charge of four strands: Response Team, Investigations, Protecting Vulnerable People, and Neighbourhood Policing. Each of these areas was briefly explained.

The five sites for the Police Service with the area were identified by CR, as were the common stages of the 'moped crime' that concerned the meeting. These are usually as follows: a moped is stolen; the robbery and subsequent disposal of goods takes place; the moped is dumped and the criminals run off. CR explained that the service has recorded closely these sets of actions and the locations in which they take place. She noted that there are no dump sites in Camden (though there are in Islington) and that the crimes within Camden mainly occur in the south of the borough. She also said that there were no known regular offenders that they are currently actively focusing on that live in Camden - they came from outside the area to commit these crimes. This claim was later strongly refuted from the floor several times.

CR informed the meeting that while Camden was not the borough with the fastest rate of growth of crime, it was at the top of the league table for crime at present. She went on to describe the Met response strategy named Operation Venice, which draws together the Police with the Mayor, the deputy Mayor and the Home Office. She also told the meeting more about local dedicated Op Attrition, an intelligence-led operation that uses a range of policing tactics to tackle moped related crime.

CR confirmed that the police were in discussions with moped manufacturers about improved security on new vehicles to prevent theft and subsequent crime. She explained that the value of a stolen phone was about £100 and that it was common for a criminal to be involved in taking up to ten phones a day. This was to illustrate the difficulty in drawing offenders away from this type of crime. She is concerned that older offenders may be grooming newer, younger offenders to engage in this area of crime.

Questions from the floor:

- Q.1** The manager of The Washington public house shared her serious concerns about the number of phone snatches and assaults on both staff and customers on England's Lane. Despite CCTV and immediate phone calls to the police, the reactions appeared slow, lacking in motivation, and ineffectual. She estimated a response reaction of about 15% to reports that she'd made to the police – some about very violent crimes. There was anger at this level of performance.
- A.1 *CR responded noting the increase in dedicated officers and the impact that Operation Attrition and Operation Venice should have over time. CR stated clearly that, despite the commonly expressed belief that officers cannot pursue moped criminals, our officers are not in fact prevented from pursuit, even when the offender has removed their helmet. The decision to pursue is in the officer's hands and that they are required to do this in line with a 'reasonable risk assessment'.*
- Q.2** CR was informed of an iPhone snatch from a young girl that occurred at 2.00pm. Was there any time when this sort of crime happened? This phone was traced to Algeria within 48 hours. Was it possible that those actually committing the crimes were less of a target to the Met, than that the criminal networks those behind the scenes?
- A.2 *No. The crime was committed all day long and CR offered her advice that it was best to keep phones out of view at all times. CR recognised that there are organisations that lie behind some of this crime that need to be broken up, but that catching people on the ground is still also their aim.*
- Q.3** A question was raised about a moped being ridden along the pavement in Primrose Hill Road. This was reported and the only response from the police was by way of e-mail. Has it become necessary for the public to take an interest in self-defence to stay safe? Why are people being left to feel less safe here in Belsize, than they had felt in some post-conflict countries and even war zones.
- A.3 *CR explained the different types of telephone response and statistics about these. She noted that these are not broken up by crime type, so she can't give data on how many times police are actually sent out for a report of a moped crime.*
- Q.4** The speed of a moped-related offence was noted. Was it time to consider installing surfaces on pavements that would prevent riding on them such as spikes?
- A.4 *CR replied explaining that this sort of measure would most likely cause problems for other lawful users of the pavement - mothers with pushchairs, wheelchair users - and that it should not have to be employed.*
- Q.5** An incident was described in which a local man had been attacked in his car by a group armed with a long handled hammer. The car's window was smashed while he was still sitting inside. When the police were called, the incident was described as 'criminal damage'. Why was this de-escalated down by the police to criminal damage, when it was clearly a vicious armed robbery? The victim did not receive a proper response from the police and still has not.
- A.5 *CR expressed regret that this had happened and noted that it did not sound like it had been correctly classified. She clarified the method by which police assess how to respond and said that she'd look into his case.*
- Q.6** A general point was made on poor service and 'lame' excuses.
- A.6 *CR emphasised the benefits of the pathfinder model – the role of the dedicated neighbourhood officers has been strengthened, extra forensics services are now available, the extra intelligence is being utilised, the extra CCTV is now in play and there is also shared intelligence with other boroughs. She explained that the police are targeting known drop sites and were involving Territorial Support officers, Trident and those involved in the policing of organised crime.*
- Q.7** A question was raised on the ability, or desire of the CPS to prosecute cases brought to them effectively.
- A.7 *It was noted that the CPS proceed on the basis of the probability of a successful prosecution and the team work hard to provide the evidence that will allow them to do this.*

- Q.8 Was there sufficient use of 'shoe-leather' and crime mapping? Are there still suitable skills left with the police to deal with the current level of crime?**
- A.8 Yes. All these aspects of policing are sufficiently available, as evidenced through the visibility of the dedicated ward officers.*
- Q.9 A series of moped-based crimes against properties in the south of the borough were committed and despite many 999 calls, the reaction to pick-up time on this number was over 3 minutes. The crimes only took 2.5 minutes. How can this be resolved? Physical evidence (2 motor-bike helmets) of those taking part was photographed and sent to the police too. There was no timely take up of this information and the response could at best be described as disjointed.**
- A.9 It was clear the CR was disturbed by this case. She clearly stated that the three minute phone pick up was not acceptable and said that she would look into this case.*
- Q.10 One question from the floor concerned motivation of the police and wages.**
- A.10 CR said that this was not an issue in addressing moped crime.*

Demonstration: Cllr Jonny Bucknell then demonstrated several moped theft methods that are seen in the area and how these may be prevented.

- Q.11 There was a feeling that this area of crime was increasing, not because of grooming of new young offenders but rather the wide perception that this crime was not being effectively prosecuted by the police. It is quite possible that by not effectively dealing with this crime now, the police would have a far harder job in years to come. Were there any areas where the public could help the police, or where the councillors could communicate with government?**
- A.11 Yes. The public can help taking care on the streets and by resisting all levels of criminality, such as the trade in illegal goods. Moped manufacturers can help by improving vehicle security and phone manufacturers by making them harder to break down and sell on.*
- Q.12 Is police morale too low? The point was made that some officers had complained to residents that they were not empowered to carry out the very role that they joined the police to do – stopping criminals.**
- A.12 CR communicated her surprise and concern at some of the comments and questions that the evening had raised. She would go away and deal with these very real issues and would be pleased to return to inform residents of improvements.*

CLL thanked CR for attending. She noted the strength of feeling in the room and gave her view that the current police response to a report of moped crime from local people did not seem to take into account the violence and seriousness of the act. She wondered if, as a result, police were not being sent out when called about these incidents. She said that she was pleased that CR had agreed to go back to her teams and make sure they do understand what is happening to us and to our neighbours on the street, so that they will respond differently. She was also pleased that CR had agreed to return to the community to explain how she has made the promised improvements to the service. CLL noted that councillors would continue to communicate with the Mayor's Office and the Home Office about residents' concerns and how we could best support police to eradicate this crime.

CR thanked everyone for the opportunity to meet them and hear their stories and said that she would come back to speak to them after Christmas about the changes that she had made.