



Minutes of Community Meeting of Thornton Heath Community Action Team (THCAT) Thursday 14 March 2024 at St Andrew's Church Hall

Welcome	by Chair Linda Watson
Apologies	Wes Baker, Tilly Pollard, Hilary Friends, Sharon Sevier, Councillor Enid Mollyneaux, Police Sergeant Alex Game
Health and Safety Notice	Provided by Barbara Richards.
Introduction	The Chair welcomed everyone, explained the format of the evening and introduced our guest speaker.
Guest	Councillor Ola Kolade, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Councillor Kolade was our guest who provided an in-depth and expansive overview of the council's work on Community Safety. As such a lot of the discussion covered Community Safety, PSPO order, VAWG.

Councillor Kolade has been in the role of Cabinet Member for Community Safety since 2022 when he was asked by Mayor Perry to take on the position.

Update

Over the last 2 years, progress has been made surrounding safety. There are over 390,000 residents in the Croydon borough making it the largest in the greater London area. There are 130 schools.

The focus is on What's happened in the past. What resources are working? What's not?

The council is collaborating with groups broken down. How can we build this up.

Safer Neighbourhood Board was launched last year and is growing from strength to strength.

What should we focus on?

1. Youth safety. Improving feelings of safety in public spaces and transport hubs.
2. Domestic abuse. VAWG. Street harassment.
3. Hot spots: Croydon Town Centre, Thornton Heath, New Addington.

How can we build a strategy?

- We can draw down from other resources for funding such as VRU, Home office etc.
- The council was issued with a section 114 notice which unfortunately restricts what the council can spend its money on.
- Outreach expanded to a full year.

- Gloves not guns. Based in Norbury
- VAWAG - Stencils displayed on the footpaths by the police to report areas where people feel unsafe is just scratching the surface of what needs to be done but is a start.
- Enable awareness of the issue.
- Resources to enforce? Persistent issues.
- British Transport Police are now involved in the area and have a dedicated sergeant to liaise with the local police, and although they have a large geographical area to cover they put additional resources into dealing with theft near railway stations when children leave school.
- Anthony Boutall, Parliamentary candidate for Streatham & Croydon North who attended the meeting agreed that more resources were required to tackle some of the problems raised, however he was pleased to see that THCAT had been able to deal with a number of local issues.
- The Street safe app was discussed, and people were encouraged to report all instances on the app so the police and council could build a picture of the hot spots in the borough.
- Facial Recognition technology has been used to good effect in the Town Centre. It is used in a number of ways by the Met, including to prevent and detect crime, find wanted criminals, safeguard vulnerable people, and to protect people from harm. As a result, they have seen a significant drop in crime and one serious offender caught. Altogether over 60 arrests have been made.
- There are concerns that this technology has a “big brother” feel. The technology scans the face. This system contains a watchlist of offenders wanted by the police and/or the courts, or those who pose a risk of harm to themselves or others and those are the only ones searched for by the technology. The list is deleted after each operation.
- Does it capture the right people? The technology is quite advanced, balaclava wearers can be detected it has recognised the twin of a wanted offender.

Resources

- OK, said that Croydon was losing one in 4 officers every time an event in London was held, and the Council had written to Mark Rowley expressing their concern on policing in the borough.
- One attendee mentioned the Community Remedy document which aims to stop people going to court if they breach the PSPO order, but it seems this document is missing.
- The Town Centre is the template for the PSPO and there have been positive outcomes achieved so far although fines have not been issued, ASB notes have been issued.

- When substance abuse is found the police response is support first then enforce.
- Concerns were raised about sufficient resources to meet mental health, and housing needs.
- The Police rotation policy of changing police officers every 6 months, has now stopped, providing more continuity.
- There have been challenges around recruiting the right type of person as a police officer in the borough, but it was agreed it was better to have the right person in place rather than have people who did not meet the high standards required for police officers.
- Unfortunately, any money not spent on recruitment of new police officers by the end of the specified time scale goes back to the Home Office and cannot be used.
- OK recently experience a day out with the police on an emergency response day - it is very interesting to the issue the police deal with on a day to day basis.

Safety on Railways

British Transport Police have launched an app that can be used should passengers have or witness any safety issues or harassment on trains 61016. Railway Guardian

Issues can also be reported on X (Twitter)

<https://www.btp.police.uk/police-forces/british-transport-police/areas/campaigns/Download-Railway-Guardian>

Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)

A PSPO has been introduced in Thornton Heath to tackle street drinking and anti-social behaviour.

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/community-and-safety/safety/crime-and-antisocial-behaviour/orders-and-injunctions/public-space-protection-orders>

The restrictions include:

1. Being in possession of an open container of, or consuming alcohol; this does not include licensed premises.
 2. Behaving in a manner, either as an individual or within a group of people, which is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress.
 3. Urinating in a public place
- The PSPO covers the Pond and clocktower. A map has been issued with the signed order implementing the PSPO dated 21st February 2024.
 - A map printed on A3 and laminated will be distributed by the Police, Neighbourhood Watch, and local councillors so they can explain what the PSPO is, how it will affect local business, and how they can ensure it is successful.

- PSPO is run in collaboration with council and the police. who will liaise with the community and get them involved. to encourage “buy in”, explain what it’s for and how they can help.
- Following on from the discussion around the PSPO a question was asked on behalf of a THCAT member: how they address anti-social behaviour in their street which they are very affected by? Who do they report to? Are there resources to tackle the problem?
- Residents dealing with anti-social behaviour are recommended to report via the Metropolitan Police website., via 101 or Street Safe. By doing this it allows the police to help tackle crime. It creates a map, and builds a pattern and database, allowing police to focus energies on areas of crime.

<https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

Residents can also report Non-emergency crime via 101

Email the Safer Neighbourhood team snmailbox.thorntonheathsnt@met.police.uk

Report on Crimestoppers <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>

If an emergency, always report on 999

<https://www.police.uk/pu/contact-the-police/report-a-crime-incident/>

Flytipping

- Fly-tipping continues to be a problem across the area. Residents are encouraged to download the Love Clean Streets app to report fly-tipping.
- One of the attendees raised concerns regarding the ongoing issue around Shamrock Road. The advice was to encourage neighbours to continue the reporting via Love Clean Streets. More people reporting will help clean up, not the fly-tipping, unfortunately.
- There was a suggestion of whether the council would erect CCTV cameras.
- One attendee reported that there are 20 cameras in housing that may be able to be utilised.
- Croydon has approx. 100 cameras in operation and 10 deployable cameras.
- Deployed cameras have been used in South Croydon recently. Hot spots. Signage
- Veolia employees are told to pick up anything to discourage people from fly tipping. Veolia are generally very quick to clear fly-tipping reported on love clean streets.
- It was felt that enforcement is missing regarding fly-tipping and monitoring is required to have any effect with substantial fines imposed on offenders.
- To help fight fly-tipping, the community needs to fight back. Suggestions are to:
- Create a street WhatsApp group; when you see fly-tipping, let the group know, and ask all to report it. Get involved in your street.

- Cllr Ola also recommended speaking to your local councillor to assist where there are ongoing issues such as Shamrock Road.

As a lot of residents don't know who their councillors are, they can find details on the following link.

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG)

There were 71 incidents reported in Thornton Heath in January.

Thornton Heath Recreation Ground

There is an issue with large groups of men congregating at the Winterbourne Rd entrance to the Rec.

This issue has been reported repeatedly. The men are intimidating, they catcall women, they are drinking, they play loud music and it stops people, especially women, from using the rec.

- Residents have complained that they feel like prisoners in their own houses. The SNT team have, in the past, advised the gatherings that if they keep drinking and noise down, that is ok.
- The Territorial Support Group which specialises in public order policing are best placed to tackle this large group and they did attend last year. But the local police need to request their services and pay for it.
- The PSPO should also be used to address the issue.
- Graham from the Friends of Thornton Heath Recreation Ground attended the meeting. Graham reported much work is being done by the group at the rec. There had been a large build-up of trash behind a garden backing onto Norbury Brook (Winterbourne entrance). It looked a real eyesore when walking around the Rec. 12 bags of rubbish were cleared, other random items and at least 30 empty bottles of Remy brandy.
- We are all appreciative of the efforts made at the rec with the gardening and cleaning by the friends group.

THCAT Updates

Book exchange

Residents are encouraged to leave any books they no longer require at the book exchange located in the waiting room on platform 2 at Thornton Heath station.

Any books and magazines are welcome. Especially children's books. Please write THCAT on the side of books.

Environmental team.

Committee members Barbara, Paul & Gaetane continue to do their walkabouts, reporting to the councillors and mayor issues they have found during their walks. The focus of the walks is to report unlicensed HMO's, fly-tipping, and planning matters.

The team submits a report to the various departments at Croydon Council each month and each quarter they review the previous reports to see what may be outstanding.

The walkabouts are proving to be very positive. The team were instrumental in influencing 2 major improvements:

- The Mosque Brigstock Road
- The BT frontage has also been improved as a result of the work of the environmental team and other members of the community. Broken windows replaced, the courtyard cleared, and the fire exit has finally been fenced off.

Current matters they are working on include: abandoned house Brigstock Road, and the burnt out buildings next to the curry house. These are a blight on our streets.

The team confirmed that they had good cooperation from the local councillors helping them to deal with the issues they had uncovered during the walkabouts.

A report has been compiled on the outstanding issues from last year, and sent to the mayor requesting a meeting to discuss these outstanding issues, and how best to deal with them.

The council's Blitz.

Paul Voden provided an update on the blitz.

- There will be a coordinated approach and an extensive communication plan with the main stakeholders and engagement with businesses by the council, ward members and THCAT. There will be a letter drop to residents above commercial premises to target fly-tipping.
- To support the initiative a new campaign will be announced to rebuild pride in the area and replace the "don't mess with Croydon" campaign.
- Campaign Initiatives include:
 1. Introduction of Street champions
 2. New signage
 3. Targeting of Rubbish hot spots
- The work will commence towards the end of April and take approximately 12 weeks.
- The street cleaning blitz will include Brigstock Road from the car washes to the Prince George pub at the end of the High Street.
- THCAT are hoping to showcase local artists' work in windows of vacant shops.

National Trust - blossom watch.

Linda Watson advised the National Trust is once again running their Blossom Watch campaign across social media. The aim is to help people across the UK appreciate the fleeting beauty of spring blossom. Residents are encouraged to share images of any local blossom in bloom.

Please bombard social media and show the beauty of Thornton Heath using hashtags #Blossomwatch. #Thorntonheath. #BlossomwatchThorntonHeath

Gardening club

Tesco Thornton Heath donated 800 daffodil bulbs to the gardening club and THCAT. Approximately 400 were planted around Ambassador House and Parchmore Road. These are now in full bloom.

The gardening club meets at Ambassador House on the 1st Saturday of every month between 1 and 3pm. Everyone is encouraged to join. No matter your age or gardening ability.

Linda closed the meeting by thanking our guest, Councillor Ola Kolade and attendees.

Councillor Kolade responded that he feels Thornton Heath is taking a very positive step forward and would be pleased to return later in the year.

A date for the next public THCAT meeting in approximately 6 weeks is to be advised.