

The role of Special Constables

Report of the Special Constable Working Group



A Working Group established by
the External Services Scrutiny Committee

Members of the working group
Cllr Dominic Gilham (Chairman)



HILLINGDON
LONDON

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Chairman's Foreword

This Working Group was set up by the External Services Scrutiny Committee to review, understand and highlight the important role Metropolitan Special Constables play within the Borough.

As Vice-Chairman of the External Services Scrutiny Committee, I was asked to chair this Working Group to look at the review and report back to the parent Committee.

I welcomed the opportunity to look into an important issue and highlight the work that Special Constables do and the positive effect they have on the community.

The Working Group looked at ways of promoting the role in the Borough and how this could be expanded. There was some confusion on the role of the Special Constable and this review sought to clarify the role and responsibilities involved.

I am very grateful to the witnesses who gave up their time and attended our meetings to provide us with the information needed to formulate our recommendations.

All involved have clarified the importance of this review and shown the need for the recommendations that we have made.

In adopting these recommendations Cabinet, can ensure that in Hillingdon, that unlike in the famous song, you CAN trust a Special like an old time copper.



Cllr Dominic Gilham

Summary of Recommendations

This is a composite list of the recommendations made by the Working Group.

Recommendation 1

That Cabinet commend the work carried out by Special Constables and acknowledge the important work they do in policing the Borough of Hillingdon. Furthermore, Cabinet note the services provided by Special Constables are as volunteers, whilst the role is exactly the same as a paid Police Officer.

Recommendation 2

That Cabinet supports the Employee Supported Policing scheme by the Metropolitan Police Service and requests that the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration writes to the Head of Metropolitan Special Constable Recruitment and Employer Supported Policing to ask that more local businesses in Hillingdon are encouraged to be part to the scheme. The Cabinet acknowledges the additional skills that trained Special Constables bring to their employers.

Recommendation 3

That Cabinet supports this Council's own commitment to BoroughBeat, the Employee Supported Policing Scheme, and recognises the Council employees who give up their time to police the Borough of Hillingdon. Cabinet request the Head of HR ensures the scheme is communicated across the whole authority and time off is consistently recorded to recognise the contribution made.

Recommendation 4

The Cabinet agree that the Council's Deputy Director for Residents Services and lead for Public Safety and Environment liaise with the Council's Communications Team to highlight the role of Special Constables and the invaluable work they do across the Borough. That this is vital work of protecting local residents and businesses is highlighted and celebrated in Hillingdon People, local newspapers the Council's own social media.

Recommendation 5

The Cabinet requests the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration writes to the Borough Commander and the Borough's Metropolitan Police Partnerships Inspector to ask that Hillingdon's MSC Managers consider the Working Group report in relation to the support and guidance given to MSCs, and report back to the Cabinet Member and External Services Scrutiny Committee, where appropriate.

Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of the Special Constable Working Group which was established by the External Services Scrutiny Committee to highlight the work that Special Constables do and the positive effect they have on the community.
2. Given the cross-cutting nature of the review the Working Group comprised Members who have experience of various Committees across the Council and the Vice-Chairman of the parent Committee, the External Services Scrutiny Committee.
3. A Special Constable is a volunteer who works alongside and offers support to regular Police Officers; they are also known as Metropolitan Special Constables (MSCs).

Reason for the Review

4. The reason for this review is to highlight the work that Special Constables do and the positive effect it has on the community. To improve awareness and the understanding of the role of Special Constables and to look at ways of promoting the role in the Borough and in-turn add value to the community.
5. The Working Group understands the needs and requirements of the agencies that support Special Constables and the services offered. The Working Group also understands that Metropolitan Special Constables fit into the longer term Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) strategy for policing the Borough and to meet the targets of the Safer Hillingdon Partnership (SHP).

Aim of the Review

6. The review sought to answer a series of questions including:
 - Establish any expectations of residents' about the MPS and Police Special Constables; and ensure that these are reflected in local service standards?
 - How Special Constables are currently recruited for the Borough and is there any additional scope for this to be improved and standardised?
 - Does Hillingdon MPS have an adequate number of Special Constables in comparison to other London Boroughs?
 - How well developed are local strategies and partnerships with regard to the career development and training of Special Constables? How can training in relation to Special Constables, including their career progression and development, be improved?
 - How does Hillingdon MPS compare with the success of Special Constables in comparison to other London Boroughs?

- What joined-up or cross-borough work does Hillingdon MPS do to ensure the Special Constables are utilised most effectively? What barriers are there to providing comprehensive support for Special Constables and for joined-up working across agencies?
 - What training is available to Police Officers and other Police Staff to support their work with Special Constables?
 - Could improvements be made to the working relationship between Special Constables, regular officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to improve the service provided in the Borough?
 - Is the training and development for Special Constables adequate to meet the standard that is required by the community?
 - What information, support and advice is available to those that may wish to become a Special Constable? How can training in relation to Special Constables, including their career progression and development be improved?
 - How can the Council assist with getting the community and organisations more involved with applications for Special Constables? And how could access to this information be improved?
 - How do Special Constables receive feedback on their performance and competency?
7. Ultimately the aim of the review was to review, understand and highlight the important role Metropolitan Special Constables (MSC) play within in the Borough.

Terms of Reference

8. The Working Group's Terms of Reference were agreed as follows:
- To review the guidance and support that is currently available to Special Constables;
 - To seek out the views on this subject from residents and partner organisations using a variety of existing and contemporary consultation mechanisms;
 - To examine best practice elsewhere through case studies, policy ideas, witness sessions and visits;
 - To improve awareness and understanding of what the role of a Special Constable is, and to explore ideas for promoting the work Special Constables do in the Borough;
 - To explore ways that people in their communities can get more involved in becoming a Special Constable; and

- After due consideration of the above, to bring forward practical recommendations to the Cabinet in relation to strengthening the role of Special Constables in the Borough.

Methodology

9. The main method for collecting evidence for this review was through witness sessions held in October 2012. Research was carried out through relevant literature and websites.
10. In addition, the Working Group asked for information from Special Constables to speak about their experiences as a volunteer Police Officer and from organisations that supported the work of Special Constables; written representation was provided.
11. This report presents the findings from these meetings and information collected. It sets out the background to how the review was undertaken and presents the Working Group's findings from the witness sessions. The recommendations contained within this report address the main issues that arose in the discussions.
12. The Working Group is incredibly grateful to people who gave up their time to attend the meetings and advise Members on the key issues.

Evidence & Findings

BACKGROUND

13. Special Constables are expected to volunteer 16 hours a month which equates to 200 hours a year to assist with policing. Every Special Constable officer is sworn in at court or in the presence of a magistrate in the same manner as a full-time ('regular') Police Officer. Special Constables work alongside regular Police Officers, and have the same powers in law, including the power of arrest unlike PCSOs.
14. The duties carried out by a Special Constable are essentially the same as those carried out by any regular Police Officer. Specials support regular officers by patrolling on foot or in a car, alone, with another Special, or with a 'regular'.
15. Hillingdon currently have 89 Special Constables that are assigned to the Borough with 83 active on the Borough.
16. Through various programmes, London Boroughs are working closely with their statutory partners to reduce crime in innovative ways. SHP is a statutory, multi-agency group working to reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime. Many local organisations are members of the Partnership including the Council, local Police, Primary Care Trust, London Fire Brigade and the London Probation Service.
17. The Partnership is overseen by a board that is chaired jointly by the Chief Executive of the Council and the Police Borough Commander. It is responsible for delivering the Hillingdon Community Safety Strategy. Based on crime data and surveys of local residents, the priorities for the Partnership this year include reduction of crime through various methods and maintain resident satisfaction levels.
18. Hillingdon Community and Police Consultative Group is the official independent body set up in 1986 as a forum for liaison between the Community and the Police. The group comprises representatives from over 50 local community groups including Tenants and Residents Associations, religious groups, voluntary organisations, and local business concerns. There is also a standing membership of three senior police representatives, three Councillors, the three local Members of Parliament and the Chair of the Independent Custody Visitors Panel.
19. The Group considers local and national policing issues of importance to the community. Plans for tackling crimes such as burglary, auto-crime and criminal damage are discussed and guest speakers are invited along to give talks on special topics from time to time. The Police report to each meeting of the group on policing issues within the Borough and seek the views of members on policy changes.

Resources available

20. The Working Group believes that it is important to remember that the Council's resources are limited and that any action taken to promote and highlight the role of Special Constables should not raise residents' expectations too high.

21. There are currently no additional resources available within the Council to devote to promoting and highlighting the role of Special Constables. As such, any work undertaken as a result of this review would have to be fulfilled within the current budgetary constraints and subsumed within the workloads of existing officers.
22. In the future, consideration could be given to how additional resources can be identified to promote and highlight the role of Special Constables that could result from the recommendations of this review.

METROPOLITAN SPECIAL CONSTABULARY

23. Two Hillingdon Police Sergeants have been managing the Hillingdon MSC team for the past two years. They are the only two Sergeants in Hillingdon that are working on the MSC team. The team have 101 Metropolitan Special Constables (MSCs) in Hillingdon with approximately 80 that are currently active. New recruits are trained at Hendon Police College then posted across London after they have passed out.
24. Specials are expected to complete a similar training process as 'regulars'. New recruits undertake 3 months of on-the-job training in a Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) where they are taught how to use equipment such as the radio. The training process also involves modules and mentoring by 'regular' officers. Once training has been completed, the Special would then be allocated to a response team or the Borough Support Unit (BSU) where they gain experience in dealing with 999 calls and policing the streets. Independent patrol status is given once competencies are signed off to the required standard.
25. There are provisions for Special's to receive expenses as there is no expectation for recruits to be financially out of pocket. To be a Special, a certain level of commitment is necessary. However, if an individual struggles to complete the required hours of service there are options such as career breaks or short term breaks if needed. If a Special is struggling with the learning modules, they could be put on an action plan by their mentor. Flexibility is given to Specials, particularly considering most have regular jobs and family commitments.
26. Specials are mainly available at weekends although they are able to work any shift. Specials are not included in the official Police strength numbers on any given day but are included if they are part of a response team.
27. There is no say or influence on the allocation of Specials to each Borough. Hillingdon has an average number of Specials which is in line with other London Boroughs and the number is steadily increasing.
28. During special events such as the Olympics and the Queen's Jubilee there has been a requirement to release Specials to relieve 'regulars' from their duties, although this has not always been possible. Approximately 15,000 Specials had been deployed during the Olympics.
29. The target figure for the Olympics was to have 6,667 Special officers. There is now a new target figure of 10,000 Specials which has been set by the Mayor of London. It is estimated that Specials volunteer for an average of 2 years before they leave, although there are some that have been volunteering for much longer.
30. Although 'regular' officers are recruited from MSCs there are individuals who volunteer to gain experience, which gives them access to other avenues of employment such as teaching or the army. There are a list of jobs such as 'security' which prevents an individual from becoming a Special. Like 'regular' officers, Specials are always on duty. As such, consideration has to be given to jobs where there could be a conflict when carrying out normal working duties or Special duties.

31. Since the recruitment process has changed in the last four years, recruits tend to use the Special role as a stepping stone to become a 'regular' officer. There are now opportunities for entry to the MPS as an Inspector through a graduate programme. However, the recruitment process for graduate entry is rigorous.
32. Specials come from a range of age groups, both genders and all walks of life. Over the last 12 years, there has been a significant increase in the number of female officers from 7% to approximately 50%. There has also been an increase in the number of young people applying to become Specials. There are currently 18 local Hillingdon Specials who have applied to become regular officers. Although not all of these will be successful, those that are would start as regular officers in June/July 2013.
33. Various companies such as Starbucks, Sainsbury's and HSBC have joined the Employee Supported Policing (ESP) scheme. It is not known if any Hillingdon based companies have registered to be part of this scheme. This scheme could be a benefit to Hillingdon if the staff from local businesses are policing their own community. There are other initiatives (for example Shop Watch, Campus Watch and Hospital Watch) that allow the police to work with organisations to raise awareness. Although some companies join such a scheme, it is often at the stores discretion. It is suggested that more could be done to encourage local businesses to be part of the ESP scheme.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE FROM METROPOLITAN SPECIAL SERGEANTS

34. **Special Sergeant:** A Special Sergeant managed a small Borough Support Unit (BSU) which had been set up last year. The Partnership Chief Inspector and Sergeant had put together a business case to set up the team on the basis that they would be able to offer support to 'regular' officers for burglaries, robberies and street crime, with the additional opportunity to work with core response teams in handling high grade calls. The BSU team also undertook traffic based work, for example, checking vehicles with no insurance.
35. There tends to be more MSC support available on Friday and Saturday. Shifts could start at 6pm and finish at 2am. However, there are times when these shifts finish at 5/6am depending on paperwork and the number of people in custody.
36. The Special Sergeant explained that as a London Borough of Hillingdon employee and part of the Borough Beat scheme, he is able to take up to 20 days paid leave each year to carry out his role as a Special. The Special Sergeant thought of himself as a 'regular' police officer rather than a Special.
37. Many Specials would commit more than the expected 200 hours per year and some even completed the minimum hours requirement within a 2/3 month time frame. It was noted that some individuals preferred to police an area away from where they lived.
38. **Acting Special Sergeant:** An Acting Special Sergeant spoke about his role as a Special Constable over the last 3 years. As a London Borough of Hillingdon employee, the Acting Sergeant's manager had agreed for him to undertake his Special Constable training in one go rather than over consecutive weekends. The training process has changed since he joined.
39. The Acting Special Sergeant is one of 16 Special officers that has been chosen to be on the criminal homicide team, which is a pilot scheme. The Acting Special Sergeant expressed his gratitude for the support he receives from the Council to carry out his Special duties in terms of flexibility.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE FROM METROPOLITAN SPECIAL CONSTABLE

40. **MSC 'A':** As well as studying for a degree in Criminology, Policing and Forensics, MSC 'A' also works part time in a supermarket. MSC's receive expenses and all basic equipment is provided free of charge.
41. MSC 'A' has been a Special for two and half years and often works 12 hour shifts at weekends or during the holiday periods as he wants to gain experience to become a regular officer. He wishes to go on to become a Sergeant, Inspector or even Commissioner.
42. MSC 'A' feels the training at Hendon is adequate but invaluable experience is gained first hand when policing the streets.
43. **MSC 'B':** He lives outside the Borough has been a Special for the 2 years. He chose to volunteer as a Special in Hillingdon as it was close to his home. He enjoys dedicating his spare time to the police and contributing to society. MSC 'B' loves the role and feels it is a great learning tool. MSC 'B' is a 'career Special' and wishes to make a difference by improving the service provided by Specials in Hillingdon. He does not want to become a 'regular' Police Officer.
44. MSC 'B' started his Special Constable career with Townfield Safer Neighbourhood Team which is one of the busier SNT Wards in the Borough. He now works with the Borough Support Unit (BSU). MSC 'B' is in the process of becoming an Acting Special Sergeant; he had been approached by managers to apply for this promotion.
45. MSC 'B' feels the training basics at Hendon is adequate and that further training and experience has been gained from doing the job first hand. It is highlighted that I.T. training is not enough for the role and there is room for improvement. The training for the day to day role is adequate, but overall that there will never be enough training for such a role.
46. He feels an average of 16 hours a month is not enough time to volunteer to be competent in the role. An average of roughly 35 hours a month or one shift a week should be sufficient as Special's are constantly learning. MSC 'B' completes around 60-70 hours a month as a Special. He feels more confident in the role as he does a number of hours.
47. The importance of the role is highlighted as well as the obvious danger that it entails. The community does not see Special's as volunteers; they view them as 'regular' police officers. If 'volunteer' is on the uniform it would make the role harder and could put Specials at potential risk.
48. MSC 'B' feels at times there is not enough leadership and direction from management. This is an area that is under-resourced and it has resulted in communication that could be vague.

49. The support from regulars varied and it is some regulars find it frustrating to train or work alongside a Special as it takes up their time. That overall the relationship between MSC's and 'regular' officers is mixed.
50. MSC 'B' feels MSC's can be under valued and under estimated in comparison to the service provided by volunteer Police Officers. Olympic volunteers have received praise for their assistance during the Olympic period, whilst Specials have not received a 'real' thank. It is agreed that more could be done to make Specials feel valued as they are also volunteers.
51. MSC B is a General Manager of a hotel and works full time. His employer is not part of the Employer Supported Policing scheme; however, his employers are flexible in allowing MSC 'B' to complete his Special duties in his own time. His employers had made allowances during the riots last summer and the Olympic period by allowing him to do shifts during work time. His employer has the benefit of a warranted/trained officer on scene when it is required.
52. MSC 'B' would encourage a member of his team if they want to become a Special, although his company head office would not support time off for this. MSC 'B' feels that the personal gains to the individual would not outweigh the financial cost to the company, given the economic climate.
53. **MSC 'C':** MSC 'C' has been a Special for 5/6 years. MSC 'C' first thought about becoming a Special when she worked at a University in Westminster. The University was advertising Campus Watch, primarily aimed at students as a way to promote becoming a Special. MSC 'C' wanted a challenge; and believes her life skills and age is a benefit, and signed up. MSC 'C' works with the Brunel Safer Neighbourhood Team. MSC 'C' does not want to become a 'regular' Police Officer.
54. Although MSC 'C' has since retired from the University it is part of the Employer Supported Policing scheme and promoted it via Campus Watch. Her employers supported her by allowing her time off to carry out Special duties. At the same time her employers benefited from her role when she was at work, as they gained a full time Police Officer on campus. MSC 'C' employer received feedback regarding her police role as part of the ESP scheme.
55. During Special's training at Hendon MSC C realised the importance and responsibility of becoming a Special when she was given a warrant card on completion. There was not a proper introduction when she got to the Borough, and she feels she was put out in a uniform to 'get on with it'. She highlights that she would have found the role difficult if she was younger.
56. MSC 'C' did 18 consecutive days training at Hendon; this has since increased to 23 days. In comparison 'regulars' have 18 weeks training. After the training at Hendon MSC 'C' did modular work, and was mentored by regular officers as part of on-the-job training. Since MSC 'C' completed her training the training system for MSC's has changed and she feels the old system paved the way for newcomers. In addition to the 5 days additional for training, MSC's now get mentored by officers who are trained to work alongside Special's.

57. There are occasions when Special's are not given support as 'regulars' may be too busy. There are also occasions when MSC's may not be given all the required resources to carry out a job adequately.
58. MSC 'C' spoke about the MSC online system, something that every Special in London has access to. MSC online has a list of jobs/duties requests and authorisation has to be given from a Supervisor for the shift. Shifts have to be shown online otherwise MSC's will not be classified as working.
59. MSC 'C' volunteered over the minimum 200 hours required. She has retired from working at the University but continues in part time employment elsewhere. She has to juggle her shifts around work and home life. She has chased criminals, assisted in drug raids, traffic operations and been in situations where firearms have been involved. MSC 'C' stated that some 'regulars' think Specials are mad to carry out the job for no financial reward.
60. MSC 'C' feels that Special's are appreciated by some 'regulars', where as some do not show the same appreciation. Specials do not get a payment outside of subsistence allowance. Whilst 'regular' officers receive overtime payment for working over the required shift, Special's do not receive anything for working over the shift time.
61. MSC 'C' has learnt a lot of life skills from her training and experience as an MSC, and there are a lot of positives to the role. Things have improved a lot in the last 6 years and she feels that Special's are respected more and treated better. She is committed to the role of a Special and understands the risks involved.

London Borough of Hillingdon

62. The Council's Anti Social Behaviour and Investigations Team Manager note that the Safer Hillingdon Partnership's overall objective is to keep the Borough safe. London Borough of Hillingdon is part of and involved in the Partnership.
63. The Anti Social Behaviour Investigation team tackles issues such as problematic licensed premises (particularly on Fridays and Saturdays) and noise nuisance; which helps support the work of the police. It is noted that the Council currently provides funding for a team of 11 'regular' Police Officers, including one sergeant, which work solely in the Borough.
64. Although many MSCs use the role as a precursor to applying to become a 'regular' officer, there are others that volunteers as a stepping stone for other careers. Concern is expressed regarding the public confusion between the roles and powers of MSCs and the PCSO role and whether that confusion/lack of clarity influences who applies.

Community & Police Consultative Group

65. The Chairman of the Police Community Consultative Group feels that the public do not know enough about Specials and the role they play. It is highlighted that Specials are an integral part of the MPS and are seen as regular officers by the public.

EMPLOYEE SUPPORTED POLICING

66. Employer Supported Policing (ESP) is a partnership between the Metropolitan Police Service, employers across the capital and their staff. This offers personal and professional development opportunity for staff and employers, to provide extra security for employers and to help towards making London safer in a significant way.
67. As a supporting employer, staff are allowed to be trained as Special Constables - volunteer Police Officers. These Specials, once trained, will carry out patrols in key areas in London with full Police powers and in many cases alongside experienced Police Officers.
68. In return the MET officer a highly skilled, highly trained member of staff. They carry out their usual "day job" at their workplace but will have the benefit of Police training and experience, bringing with it a whole host of knowledge and skills including confidence assertiveness, conflict resolution and better links with local Police teams and senior officers.
69. The Met provide the selection process, administration, vetting, medicals etc, plus training, equipment, uniform, ongoing development and a wide range of skills and experience. The scheme asks employers to provide staff with paid leave to attend the training course and time off for their regular Specials duties once fully trained. Sponsorship of staff is flexible.
70. ESP partners include those in the public and private sector, including well known companies, small firms, local authorities, NHS trusts and more. However ESP started off as a single-sector scheme now known as ESP Shop Watch, with staff from the retail industry. It has proven to be a success and now the MET support their civilian Police Staff with paid leave to train and patrol as Special Constables.
71. Key findings include overall levels of crime going down and the fact that 93% of day job line managers of recruits would recommend the retail ESP scheme to other retailers.
72. As well as the main ESP scheme, there are also five industry-specific schemes, tailored to work specifically with those industries, making best use of staff's existing industry knowledge and with policing directed towards those areas:
- **ESP ArtBeat** - Tackling fraud and forgery in the world of arts and antiques
 - **ESP BoroughBeat** - For local authorities, staff and communities
 - **ESP BusBeat** - For bus operators and related organisations
 - **ESP HospitalWatch** - For NHS hospital trusts, making London's hospitals safer
 - **ESP ShopWatch** - For the retail industry and staff, tackling crime in stores and on the high street

FUTURE WORK

73. Having researched work done in other boroughs, we found there are similar reviews completed on Police Community Support Officers but nothing on Special Constables. Therefore there are very limited examples that Hillingdon could follow in promoting the role of Special Constables.
74. The investment of the MPS into Special Constables is considerable and it is noted that the average career of a Special Constable, for various reasons, is 2 years. Ways in which the MPS could retain Special Constables for a longer period could be considered in the future.
75. Further work also could be undertaken regarding what action the Council can take to improve the services it offers. Consideration can be given to how the Council can link in with the MPS to meet the needs of those who wish to volunteer as a Special Constable.
76. It is noted that the number of people applying to be Special Constables is generally quite constant and has increased with the changes in regular Police Officer recruitment. Future work in assessing the quality of applicants could be considered.
77. All organisations are under pressure to perform with fewer resources so they have to be innovative with what they have available. Other avenues have to be considered if resources are not available including coordination, communication and multi agency working.

Closing word

78. Special Constables provide an important policing presence in Hillingdon and the Working Group wish to highlight this role and the impressive work done by Special Constables as volunteers in the Borough.
79. The Council's commitment to the Employee Supported Policing scheme can be highlighted to encourage other organisations in Hillingdon to join the scheme.
80. The MPS are aware of the importance of the role of Special Constables and it can be noted that overall Special Constables have communicated through this review that they feel they are a valuable part of the organisation.
81. From the witness sessions held and information collated, the key points that came out from Special Constables are that they enjoy the role of a Police Officer and the skills they learn doing the job are invaluable.
82. It has been highlighted to the Working Group there are incidents where Special Constables feel a lack of direction from management and asks the Hillingdon MSC Manager's to note this. The Working Group notes there is currently a recruitment drive for Acting Special Sergeants and hopes this will improve the direction Special Constables receive.
83. There are some Special Constables that feel they are not getting enough advice or support that they require to carry out the role to their full potential. It is important that the services offered to Special Constables are consistent across the Borough and a consistent feedback mechanism is given to all Special Constables.
84. The Working Group would like to highlight the Employee Supported Policing scheme and are grateful that the London Borough of Hillingdon allows its employees to be part of this scheme through Borough Beat.
85. It is noted that the approach throughout the Council is not consistent and the Working Group would encourage a more formal way of allowing staff time off for training and carrying out Special Constable duties. Not all Council employees use Resource Link to authorise time off to carry out their Special Constable duties. By a consistent mechanism being used for recording the time off for Special Constable duties this can show how many hours are contributed by the Council to Police the Borough.
86. The Working Group would also like to highlight organisations such as Sainsbury's, KPMG, and Local Authorities who have made a commitment to allowing their staff work as Special Constables through the Employee Supported Policing scheme.

Comments of the External Services Scrutiny Committee

87. The External Services Scrutiny Committee established this Working Group to examine the role of Special Constables in the Borough. We, the Committee, have considered the Working Group's findings outlined in this report and are delighted to present these to Cabinet and the Council's partners. The report outlines the importance of Special Constables in providing an invaluable service to the residents of Hillingdon. We fully endorse the recommendations.

Appendix 1:

Additional comments from MPS

What are the benefits to the employer for entering the Employee Supported Policing (ESP) scheme? The benefits with having additional training has been noted. What are the incentives to an employer to release their employees?

Training for staff is a big benefit to managers, departments and whole businesses, but for customer-facing businesses like retail, it's also about having an off-duty police officer working on the premises, with direct links to the police and the ability to share intelligence (within legal boundaries). For all businesses (customer-facing or not) it's about having better links with the police, and it's a very visible way for a business to demonstrate their corporate social responsibility.

How does the the MPS actively source companies to join the ESP scheme?

It's a combination of centrally-carried out marketing, direct approaches to key organisations, local teams working directly with employers and making sure ESP information can be found (e.g. on the web). For key strategic partners, like local authorities, we always deal directly.

How do companies advertise the ESP scheme to employees?

Once an employer signs up (and their application is accepted by the central ESP team), either the local police team (small to medium businesses) or someone centrally representing ESP (for large pan-borough employers like councils and large 'household names') works with that employer on a communications plan. We can also provide literature that can be given to staff and put on intranets.

We ask that someone very senior in the organisation sends a message to all staff to consider joining, and to anyone with line management responsibilities to encourage their staff to take part and support them in doing so.

We handle (and pay for) the entire recruitment and selection process from start to finish, so all an employer needs to do is promote it to their staff, and pay for things they might want to do to promote it (like posters).

How many of Hillingdon MSC are part of the ESP scheme?

11

Is feedback given to employers on their employees?

Yes. We encourage the local supervisors of the Special Constables to build a strong working relationship with 'day job' line managers so that they can share appropriate information about what their staff are doing when they're Specials. For the last two years, every ESP officer has had an annual certificate/statement of service sent to their 'day job' line manager for presentation and congratulation (or for challenge, when the hours are low). This particular part of feedback may reduce as part of Met functions slimming down, but the communication on the ground is the most important and effective part of the link with the employers anyway.

Do you have a breakdown of the number of years people stay as Special's?

Over the last two years we have had 54 officers resign from the MSC at XH: length of stay as follows:

Resign in training = 4

Resign within the first year = 5

Resign with 1 - 2 years service = 18

Resign with 2 - 3 years service = 13

Resign with 3 - 4 years service = 8

After four years it is very ad hoc as people then tend to stay longer as reflected below:

2 resigned with 5 years service

1 resigned with 6 years service

1 resigned with 14 years service

1 resigned with 19 years service

1 resigned with 28 years service.

Do you have a number of MSC that are 'career Specials'?

Difficult to say, we only have 11 out of 88 that have been in for more than 4 years. It is also difficult to ascertain if they are career specials. How is this defined, five years, 10 years or more as a special. For example one of the MSC that has been in longer than 4 years is applying now to be a regular.

How many LBH employees are part of the Boroughbeat scheme?

4

Do employers receive any benefit by releasing their staff to the employee supported scheme (e.g. tax relief, any other financial incentive)?

There isn't tax relief or direct payments, but the Met are funding the selection, training and ongoing experience of successful applicants, the employers get police-trained staff working in their organisation, they can promote their membership of the programme and for customer-facing employers, they improve customer service and reduce crime.

**Neil Barrett, Head of MSC Recruitment and Employer Supported Policing for the MPS.
Sergeant Simon Robson. MSC Manager, Hillingdon.**

Appendix 2:

Comments from Special Inspector

How long have you been a Special? I Joined in 2002 in Herts (Watford) and became a Special Sergeant in 2003. In 2012 I became a Special Inspector.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? No

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? No. Whilst I would love to, my mortgage is too prohibitive for me to join.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? We get good initial training at training school. Once allocated to a borough, the training becomes less regulated. It is mainly learning on the job. After an MSC officer attains Independent Patrol Status, there is not a dedicated support system other than mandatory training packages such as Officer Safety Training and Emergency Life Support training. It is down to the individual officer to ask for help if they feel they need it. There is never a shortage of regular Sergeants to answer ad-hoc questions however. Steps are being taken to identify areas of weakness at a local level and address them however each borough's road map is different. As an example Hillingdon Borough has recently given training on Victims Codes of Practice and statement taking.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? Yes. To solve new an interesting problems whilst still doing the thing I love, policing.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? Verbally or via email following a job normally from the officer I was working with.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? My previous employer of 7 years (KPMG) was a member of the ESP. They allowed employees to take 15 paid days off a year. I am currently a contractor and therefore am no longer part of the ESP scheme.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? I generally feel valued by other Special Constables but not by all regular colleagues. Some regular officers find it difficult to work with a volunteer who may not have all skills to get them through a shift unaided. I have some sympathy with them and prefer to use this to ensure volunteers aim high, continuously improve and earn the respect of their regular colleagues.

Would you recommend the role? Without doubt yes. There is no other job like it for variety, fulfilment and excitement. You can go from the highest high to the lowest low in one shift, much like a roller-coaster that I never want to get off.

Appendix 3:

Comments from Special Constables

How long have you been a Special Constable? 3months

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? No

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? No

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? No. Also all the training available is on a weekday which makes it almost impossible for any MSC to attend. Is there no way of having for example Public order training on a weekend?

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? No

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? n/a

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? Yes, 37hrs unpaid. My work gives me 5 days per year, but it is unpaid which makes things hard as money is not the easiest of things to come by.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? n/a

Would you recommend the role? Maybe

A big issue for me at present is using this new MSC online system and also on availability for duty. There is only one sergeant available for me to do duties with and the hours he does are not good for me due to my current work commitments. I was also hoping to do a few hours here and there, but this too is not possible and have to do a full 7.5hr shift which is very difficult for me to do especially as I have already been working 7.5hrs earlier that day.

How long have you been a Special Constable? 8 months.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? Yes.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular' Yes, I have recently applied to become a regular officer.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? Initially at Hendon the training was very basic however since coming onto Hillingdon Borough the support from my regular colleagues had been great.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? Yes, I have recently applied to become an Acting Special Sergeant.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? Usually are colleagues after dealing with incidents.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? No.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? Yes I feel regular officers on Hillingdon Borough make special feel very welcome and I have not had a bad experience with a colleague to date.

Would you recommend the role? Most definitely.

How long have you been a Special Constable? 2 years.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? No.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? No.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? Yes.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? No.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? No.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? No.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? Sometimes but generally no.

Would you recommend the role? Yes.

How long have you been a Special Constable? 3 years.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? No.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? No.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? Training - No, mostly completed "on the job with a good role model".
Support - yes, as long as working with a supportive team.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? No.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? Very often aren't given feedback unless involved in a "big job" in which case you may get a "well done".

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? Yes - released 2 days per month. I work for the Met Police and are released 2 days a month paid.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? Mostly - still find the occasional officer who doesn't appreciate you - but far and few between the majority of the time.

Would you recommend the role? YES! Learn life skills you would never learn anywhere else. Have the opportunity to give something back to the community.

How long have you been a Special Constable? Since a year.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? For my university yes I do, but my actual home address is Milton Keynes.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? Yes, but first to gain some experience and see if this job would suit me as a future career.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? Yes, but it always depends on the day, sometimes you have a very busy day but on other days the streets are very quiet, but regular officers support me very well and guide me through the procedures and appear very pleased to work with specials.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? Not sure, haven't thought about it yet.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? Officers will observe my performance and then give me feedback on what i did well and what needs to be improved as well as what i have missed out. The sergeants will read through the papers such as 5090 or other books that i completed and have a brief discussion on what needs to be improved.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? No, I am not.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? Yes, I do.

Would you recommend the role? Definitely, I would.

How long have you been a Special Constable? 10 months.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? Yes.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'?
Unsure, thought I would volunteer for a while and see whether I wanted to change careers or just keep it as a volunteer thing.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? The Hendon training wasn't brilliant, however now that I am on a great team (STT) I feel like the regular officers train and support me well.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? Possibly, not confident enough at the moment, but will see what the future holds.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? We have forms that the regular officers fill in regarding our performance on the packs. They also give me continuous feedback whilst on the job as we deal with things.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? Yes, 20 days per year. Would be beneficial if we could be given 4 more days to cater for the minimum duty requirements.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? Yes.

Would you recommend the role? Definitely. Great way to improve personal confidence and people skills for your day to day life, as well as being exciting and enjoyable.

How long have you been a Special Constable? **2 years.**

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? **Yes.**

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? **Yes.**

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? **Yes.**

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? **No.**

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? **Yes.**

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? **No.**

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? **Yes.**

Would you recommend the role? **Highly yes.**

How long have you been a Special Constable? I have been a Special Constable for just over 2years.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? When I started as a Special I did live in the Hillingdon Borough but now I live in Hertfordshire.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? Yes.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? Personally I don't believe there is enough training for Special Constables. I think we are taught the bare minimum and therefore feel pressured when on duty from others, as we are expected to know something we have not been taught. I realise that you can learn as you go along, but that can be very stressful and sometimes difficult in certain situations, such as booking prisoners in and out of custody, as we are not taught this when training and to get it right is very important as many other things. But my sergeant and team were very helpful and eager to help when I needed it.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? I am leaving the MET due to change of paths, but if I was to stay I would of liked to have climbed up as much as possible.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? I've received feedback from my sergeant and other colleagues face to face, which is my preferred way so I can discuss how to improve, if I can.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? n/a

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? I do feel valued by my close colleagues but I feel very uncomfortable at times, for example, when I'm on aid with regular officers I don't know. I have had no experience of being spoken to badly but I am cautious, as I know some regulars don't think Special Constables are very beneficial.

Would you recommend the role? I would recommend the role but I would outline any issues.

How long have you been a Special Constable? 8 months.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? Yes.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? No.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? No.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? Hopefully.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? To date no feedback given on performance.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? No.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? Yes.

Would you recommend the role? Question mark at the moment.

How long have you been a Special Constable? I attested from Hendon in October 2011 but I started working in Hillingdon in January 2012.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? No I don't live in Hillingdon Borough; I actually live in the TVP area.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? Yes, I have wanted to join the police as a career since I was 13, I am now 22.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? When I left Hendon I didn't feel I had been taught enough. However I soon realised it really is a case of learning on the job. This is good as long as you are partnered with a PC who is willing to teach you, understanding that you are new and still learning. I do think it would be better to have more contact with a particular PC or PS to talk about progress/ problems/ good work etc. I work with so many different people which means that not one person actually knows how I'm getting on. It is good to have mentors working on the response teams - these are PC's who have put themselves forward as willing to be partnered with MSC's.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? I would like to stay as a MSC, and then as a PC once I get in, as I like the job and prefer to be out on the streets making a visible difference and interacting with the public.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? I am given no real feedback from my performance, which I think would be good if it changed. Obviously during or after a shift the PC I am working with may say 'well done' etc but it is never more than that. When I have dealt with some very challenging cases I would feel appreciated and valued a bit more if my line manager for example heard that I had done a good job in a difficult situation.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? No, I work as a MSC in my own time as well as doing a full time and a part time job. I enjoy the work that I do as a MSC and also want to improve, so I try to do one or two shifts as a MSC each week.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? I feel valued and respected by my colleagues since I have been working on the response team. I think this is because you really are there to do the same job as everyone else and to help your partner/team and completely pull your own weight. I often receive comments from them like 'I can't believe you are doing this for free'. While I'm working I completely forget I am just a volunteer as I am so zoned into the job in hand. Officers who are not working on the streets with you and therefore don't see what you are doing all the time, eg. custody sergeants, CID, often get irritated if you don't know how to do something quickly, or where something is - they seem to forget that you do not work regularly and we are actually still learning on the job.

I also don't feel that line management know the work and effort we put in. I feel that they only see the statistics - how many hours we work and if there are problems. It would be nice to have a link between the PC's that we go out on patrol with and our managers.

Would you recommend the role? Yes, I would recommend the role. It is difficult for many reasons, eg. having to do it in your spare time including shifts overrunning, having to learn on the job and not always completely knowing what you're doing, not knowing the people you are working with very well as you don't often see them, not getting paid, not knowing for definite that

you have a career at the end of it. That last point is what I find most difficult. However, I love the job and just wish I could do it full time right now.

How long have you been a Special Constable? I have been working as Special since June 2012. However, I was attested on 29th January 2012.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? Yes.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? Yes.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? Yes.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? No.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? Officers I work with always tell me when I have done something well or point out the area I need to improve on.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? No.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? I do.

Would you recommend the role? I would. It is a very good way to gain more confidence and to do something positive and valuable for the community.

How long have you been a Special Constable? 18 months.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? Yes.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? Yes.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? Yes.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? I thrive to achieve my full potential as a voluntary police officer.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? Initially, through PAC Assessments and IPS Workbooks. Feedback is generally received through verbal communication and shift debriefs.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? n/a

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? Yes. The MPS are generally very grateful for the contribution of the MSC.

Would you recommend the role? Indeed. I believe the life skills that one learns are invaluable.

How long have you been a Special Constable? [Attested on 17th September 2012.](#)

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? [Yes Northwood.](#)

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? [Maybe.](#)

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? [I hope to start regular shifts in the new year \(2013\) when I have more time commit. I am still completing NCalts from home.](#)

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? [I would like to experience different roles in policing](#)

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? [Unsure.](#)

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? [No.](#)

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? [n/a](#)

Would you recommend the role? [n/a](#)

How long have you been a Special Constable/Sgt? 29 years.

Do you live in Hillingdon Borough? Yes.

Did you join to become a Special Constable with a view to join to become a 'regular'? No.

Are you given adequate training and support to fulfil your role as a Special Constable? No.

Do you plan on working your way up the ranks as a volunteer police officer? Ex-Sergeant.

How are you given feedback regarding your performance? No.

Are you part of an Employee Supported Policing scheme? If yes, how many hours per year does your employee release you for you to carry out Special Constable duties? No.

Do you feel valued and respected by colleagues? Totally and I have great respect for them.

Would you recommend the role? Yes.

Appendix 4:

Case Study - Sainsburys

In the region of Sainsburys there are two serving Special Constables and the company is committed to supporting their police schedules as far as business needs will permit.

Sainsburys is not currently in the scheme but does support Specials as far as business needs will permit with their working schedules.

It is noted that there is no financial incentive to support colleagues in this way.

Since Sainsburys are not in the scheme they do not advertise it. But are aware that colleagues are Specials and the company discusses how it might be of assistance.

Corporately there is support for such colleagues but decision making is made locally in respect of support for time off, where requested.

It is noted in this case the two Specials work in Kenton and the other in Alperton, neither in Hillingdon.

The company is trialling a new way of working in supporting Specials and will decide on the next steps following a review shortly.

Elsewhere within Sainsburys there is a scheme being piloted to look at what further assistance can be given as part of the company commitment.

Appendix 5: Glossary, References & Further Reading

Glossary

ASB	Anti Social Behaviour
BSU	Borough Support Unit
CJIT	Criminal Justice Integrated Team
CPS	Community Payback Scheme
CST	Community Safety Team
DAAT	Drug and Alcohol Action Team
DIP	Drug Intervention Programme
DRRs	Drug Rehabilitation Requirements
DV	Domestic Violence
ESP	Employee Supported Policing
IOM	Integrated Offender Management
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
MSC	Metropolitan Special Constable
PCC	Police Consultative Committee
PSCO	Police Community Support Officer
POC	Policy Overview Committee

PPOs	Prolific and other Priority Offenders
SHP	Safer Hillingdon Partnership
SNT	Safer Neighbourhood Team
TOM	Total Offender Management
XH	Hillingdon

References / Further Reading

www.policemales.com

<http://www.metpolicecareers.co.uk/specials/>

<http://content.met.police.uk/Borough/Hillingdon>

<http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/7523/Community-and-police-consultative-group>

<http://www.met.police.uk/esp/esp.htm>