

Talk Richmond Transcript

Cllr Jim Millard: Hello and welcome back to Talk Richmond with me, your host Jim Millard. In today's episode we're focusing on community safety in Richmond Upon Thames. We'll be discussing the various ways you can report crime, the role of the Safer Neighbourhoods Board and how our partnership approach keeps our borough the safest in London.

Joining me today are Roger Metcalfe, Chair of the Safer Neighbourhood Board and Inspector Jon McLoughlin from the Richmond and Twickenham Safer Neighbourhoods Team. without further ado, welcome Roger and Jon to Talk Richmond. Thanks, Jim. Appreciate it. Hi, Jim. Good to be here. How are you both?

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: I'm very good.

I'm not too bad. Very busy, but, no. Massive thank you for letting us, come today and, have my chance to, to sell community policing.

Roger Metcalfe: Good to be here. I've, made time for this because it's so important.

Indeed. Well said. It is so important. Jon, I mean, this is all about, in a sense, partnership and working with the community.

How does the partnership between the police and the community help in addressing local issues?

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: Jim, I think it's the most important thing about policing, for myself, community policing is the key to everything that we do, not only in London, but, across all of policing, we need to have that relationship with our community so that when things are happening in those areas that we know they're happening.

it's fair to say at the moment that, Our resourcing picture and the amount of times that we can be visible within our communities, it's a lot more challenging. So we rely on people to tell us exactly what is happening, when it's happening, and that then gives us that capability to put our officers or staff, as in our PCSOs, Police Community Support Officers, who are very key to community policing, into those areas to deal directly with those issues to ensure that we can proactively and collaboratively stop them happening.

Cllr Jim Millard: Yes. Thanks, Jon. That's very clear. And I just wanted to ask Roger as well, to turn to you, Roger. Tell us a bit about what the role of the Safer Neighbourhoods Board is and what its importance is in Richmond Upon Thames.

Roger Metcalfe: Thanks, Jim. Well, it's no coincidence that the Safer Neighbourhood Board, sounds very, similar to, what, Jon is commanding in Richmond.

So he and the police have formed safer neighborhood teams and to support what the police are doing and to support the mayor's plan, we have safer neighborhood boards and those are in place right across London. Every one of the 32 London boroughs has one, and it's my privilege to chair the board. So it's very much a complimentary effort.

But whereas Jon looks after the policing and is seeking community relations, I look after the community side of things, or should I say, complement the council in doing that, and one or two other bodies and charities. It's an important body. It aims to provide. bring the communities and the police together for the community to communicate their concern to the police so that they can be heard.

and then we can help decide local policing and crime priorities, and solve any problems collaboratively.

Cllr Jim Millard: So you've got all these different, representatives of different parts of the community feeding into the board. How do you use the feedback from residents to shape the priorities and initiatives for the board?

Roger Metcalfe: Yeah. Well, it's, it's so important to do that. Many meetings, in the public space come together and, report on progress up to those, meetings. So those meetings are very often one way conversations because they'll just deliver a report and say, this is what we've done and they're accountable that way.

That's, absolutely valid. The SNB and indeed the PLGs, they operate in a slightly different way. When the community and the, SNB or the. Ward level at PLGs, when they come together, the work is done then. And the, first and foremost, they should be listening events. And when I, give guidance to the PLG chairs, for example, and I, try and operate this way myself, that the chair is talking not very much.

And it's mainly an opportunity for, Reports to be made for the police to account for their performance, for example, and deliver a report there in a public setting. The board is open to everyone and then any, member of the community, either in person that they can come themselves to one of these meetings and express their concerns or ask questions, or they can do so by asking a member of the board to represent their view for them.

The expert, constituents. If you like, of my board, I try and represent most interests in the community. So we have a representative from Royal Parks, we have a representative from the street pastors who do such good work in the evening going around the, the town centre. And any, member can express a concern there that may be of relevance.

to policing in the borough and then that concern can be heard, in the board. And if they prefer, they can do so at ward level and then PLG chair as can communicate their concerns to me and to the SMB so that we can, work out how to translate that concern into a different police priority or, specific action or advice, for the member concerned.

Cllr Jim Millard: May I ask Jon, how does this feedback and this sort of, curating of the priorities and defining of initiatives, how does that help inform the work of your teams?

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: So the PLGs, the priorities are agreed at that meeting. and that's normally jointly between the chairs, the people that attend and also the officers.

it's fair to say a lot of our priorities are very similar across this borough. We know that we are one of the safest boroughs in London, however we are susceptible to offences such as, theft from motor vehicles, burglary, you know, robbery, violent offences, and we're very mindful that whatever we want, we're trying to prioritise is to keep our community and Richmond Borough the safest.

So to do that. With the information that is given to us, it then means that we can look at certain offences that are occurring, the trends, and then the way that we problem solve it is to be putting officers in there or utilising specialist officers. So they're really important meetings and I would encourage anybody who would like to be part of it.

To speak to your local community team and do come down. We value everyone's voice. We need to know, and unfortunately we don't have the capability to be out there, be visible all the time on patrols because ideally that's what we want. We want police officers supported by the PCSOs to be on the street all the time, talking to the community.

So this is a really important meeting for us. And as Roger said, from that, we will get our priorities and then the sergeants, We'll then create a plan, allocate our resources, and we do a monthly meeting called a crime fighting meeting, where we analyse all the priority crimes. It shows us a map of the whole borough, and from this we can then work towards dealing with whatever issue is evident on each ward.

Cllr Jim Millard: And how can residents get involved in their local police liaison group, or how can they find out about them?

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: I can go first. So they are advertised on the Metropolice website. If you go onto the Metropolice website, you can put your postcode in and what it will do is it'll bring up the ward that you're governed by and within that there are drop downs and it will tell you what type of meetings we have.

Every month included in that will be, the police liaison group meetings, as well as other meetings, street briefings or contact points. And again, they're really good opportunities for us to meet people and for the, and the residents to know about these, the other option is to contact your local ward team.

They have an email address. Every ward team has an email address. these addresses are advertised cross. different social media, but predominantly it will be the ward that you live in. So if we look at Hampton, it will be hamptonatmet. police. uk. And then you can contact the officers directly through that.

I'll let Roger add anything.

Roger Metcalfe: the only thing to add, I suppose, is the community links. And, whereas Jon is an incredibly well resourced, public sector organisation. I'm being slightly mischievous because it's well known that the Met Police are not resourced as well as the community would like and the SNB is playing its part in making the case for better resourced police in the capital.

But in contrast to the police who have big resources for communications, The SNB is entirely voluntary, but we're very fortunate that we have a number of networks and then the support of the council. Firstly, our networks, the neighbourhood watch coordinator is probably the first person that you will see in, in your street.

And that network of all the neighbourhood watch coordinators is pretty good. connected to the police liaison groups at ward level, and then the police liaison groups are connected to the Safer Neighbourhood Board. So it's very easy for any member of the community, wherever they are across the borough, to make contact, through word of mouth, through, posters on the street, and, through WhatsApp groups in streets or, or blocks.

And then we're very fortunate, as I say, to have the support of the council. The Safer Neighbourhood Board is featured on the council website, and we can be connected like that.

Cllr Jim Millard: Yes, indeed. And your point about resources is well made. And of course, you know, we as the council are also lobbying for more resources for our safer neighborhood teams.

Of course,

people listening might also be wondering about how they actually report individual incidents when they're happening. And I'm sure you'd encourage people to call 999 if they think there is a crime being committed. But in addition to that, what support other than the Calling 999 is available to residents for the less urgent issues.

How can they get in touch and report those and how does this help reduce the burden on those emergency services who are, as we say, having to direct their resources to where they're most needed?

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: So Jim, just to answer that, and it's a really good point, if it is an emergency and there's a crime, that is going on at that point or any persons.

is inferior for themselves or their property, then please do call 999. Just if you do have a hearing or speech impairment, you can use text phone service, which is 18, 000, or you can text via the 999 service. If you need to do this, you need to register first. And that is to register, you send a text to 999 and then you go through a register system.

and there's also an app called Relay UK app, which can be used. In regards to non emergency calls, then we have the 101 system, and I appreciate people's views on that, but I would still encourage people to use 101 to report crime. The other alternatives we have is the Metropolitan Police website. If you go onto there, you have, options to.

Record a crime, and you can also report and social behavior. And again, if you do it via these channels, then a reference number will be created. And what it means is then that will come through to us on the local policing teams, and then we can action. I'm fully aware that people use, next door and next door is a social media system that we have access to, but we only have access to it as a business user.

So we cannot see what people are posting on there. We can post on there and then we can see the replies. So I appreciate there are frustrations by residents who use that because they're assuming that we do know what's happening and we don't. So please, I would ask you to use the official channels.

Cllr Jim Millard: I know that sometimes people might well feel that they're hesitant to report minor incidents or suspicious activities. What would your advice be to them?

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: simply please do report it because what may seem as minor, these tend to build up and build up. And a good example I can give you is youths just congregating at the end of your road or, in a sort of park.

Park space area. And obviously there's a perception of use. And we know that when they're together, they can be a lot louder and boisterous, and it could be that there is drug taking, there is alcohol being drunk. If we don't know that these incidents are happening, what then tends to happen is the behavior escalates, and then it could start in sort of low level type crime of, assaults, violence, thefts, and then it builds up and builds up.

If we're made aware that these incidents are occurring, then what we do, We don't go down to the police solely. We will use our, our different partners. So again, knowing that we can then act on it.

Cllr Jim Millard: Exactly. And you know, that's the potential to turn things around and these sorts of involvement from the community, these possibilities, it's really important, isn't it?

To get that message out there that people don't feel they can only report something when it's an emergency, but that They can help you build these pictures that can really help to, achieve things.

Roger, I wanted to ask you, what projects has the Safer Neighborhoods Board been involved in? Have they benefited the community? I mean, can you give an example of any success story where community involvement has significantly improved safety in a particular area?

Roger Metcalfe: I've got a couple of examples. The first thing I wanted to highlight is Safe Space Richmond.

This is a fantastic initiative that was streamed up by one of my predecessors and is, a cooperation between the board and the council. And with council community safety staff and police officers and British Transport staff, who are given some police training, they come together and provide people to provide a presence outside Richmond Station on a Saturday night.

This has been a great success, and in a very, soft way, and a subtle way, it provides a presence in the town centre, which is much needed on a Saturday night, to support the night time economy, and provides a fantastic, reassuring presence for everyone, particularly women and girls, and my funds help to, to sustain that, and the officers there, give out some anti-spiking kits, and little torches and, alarms and so on, to anyone who needs, those items.

And they tend to fly off the shelves from Safe Space Richmond. The other one that I wanted to highlight is, streetwise Projects and Mothers Against Mugging. It really has been such a great success, thanks to the work of, two ladies who are not members of the SMB, in fact, but I, provided the funds for their project.

That charity is called Mothers Against muggings.com. And it helps young people at school principally to just be a little bit more street wise, to keep their precious belongings, their attractive belongings hidden, and keep their eyes and ears open for anyone who might try and steal their things. cash or their phone or whatever, and should that happen to them or if they should see it, the PAC helps them to know how to report it quickly.

I've got statistics actually which show that the level of muggings outside school gates has reduced as a direct result of this streetwise project, so I'm delighted with it. It continues to be a high priority.

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: I can only reiterate about Mothers Against Muggings and Flick and Barbara, the work they do is phenomenal.

and again, from a policing perspective, it's very difficult for us as police officers to engage with certain parts of the community, especially youths. Because ultimately, to prevent people being victims, we just want them to be mindful of their surroundings, what they're doing, their actions, their behaviour.

What Mothers Against Muggings do. does so well is that they, deal with it from a different perspective to us. And, people will actually listen to them. And like Roger said, the work they've done is incredible. And when we actually look at the statistics around robbery, school boy robberies, it is low and a lot of it is low because of those messages that are being sent out and the information that's being retained in that manner.

So absolutely brilliant. And we'll always support it. The Safe Space, again, I was fortunate to be part of when it got initiated, what it's done, is created a safer environment in and around Richmond. And, it's fair to say that, we are looking to build it up as we continue to go along.

And the SNB have, a little bit modest, but the money they've put into that, especially with the street. Street pastors, from the Vineyard Project. Again, it makes such a difference in a community where as police, we can't be as visible on a Friday, Saturday night. So other people are there helping us.

So to have had the support of the community makes such a difference because it means they're fully supported. They can be helped and assisted. And also it means that as police, we can then move on and then deal with the emergency calls as well.

Cllr Jim Millard: Oh, that's fantastic to hear about that. And you know, Mothers Against Muggings was our first Talk Richmond podcast when we started, had them in and they talked all about it.

It's, I hope it's still available somewhere on our website. So if you want to know more, you could look that up.

And Roger, what, I think you've touched on this to a certain extent, but Given what Jon's been saying as well, and I've got my question here. What are some ways that the board is working to improve communication and build trust between the police and the community?

Roger Metcalfe: Anyone who says that, communication is everything is, absolutely right.

Just to reiterate, you know, The, the Safer Neighborhood Board, it's about 30 members, and the PLG's 18 members there, and a lot of Neighborhood Watch coordinators. And when you add everything up, the Neighborhood Watch members of those groups, you're already into the hundreds. So there's a huge network.

Most of those are connected. Already by email and whatsapp and very active. So what i'm championing is the super local level neighborhood watch coordinator level at street level and at plg level in the wards you have face to face communication you have the the whatsapps and and email and getting people together in informal groups And for perhaps more formal ones.

And the listening function is so important to what we're doing. Then, mainly through the, Jon's, excellent, WhatsApp update systems. If you join an MPS, update, community, you can very quickly get an update where it is possible for Jon to disseminate that on a serious incident. There's a number of ways that people can join that there's a public one where non sensitive information can be very rapidly disseminated to explain that.

An incident perhaps has cleared and at the town center is available for access. So communication is very, important. I would just round off by saying it is an open community. So any member of the public can come along and join, attend a PLG meeting or indeed attend the SMB. So our openness, it underpins and supports our.

communications efforts, very little of what we do is, hyper confidential at 99 percent of it is open to everyone. And the whole point is for public participation. And I hope that through our various channels, we're enabling that.

Cllr Jim Millard: Indeed, And we've already talked about how people can get involved, which is fantastic.

And, I just wanted to ask Jon, what resources, in addition to what Roger's talked about, is there anything we'd add about how residents can stay informed about crime and safety updates in their area?

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: Yeah, it's just to reiterate the WhatsApp channels, each ward has its own WhatsApp channel and then there is a Richmond Borough WhatsApp channel that we use to disseminate our information so we can go quite locally to the ward itself or we can go across the borough depending on the information and that, to get access to that, then speak to your local ward teams, they can send you the QR code and then they, and then you can be invited into it.

Each ward cluster creates a monthly bulletin that we send out and that will go out through our key partners and go through our key contacts. As Roger said about neighborhood watch coordinators, they're key to this because we will send it to them and then they can disseminate it down through the residence.

And I would encourage everyone to sign up to Neighborhood Watch. It's a brilliant system for us. It's like Roger said, the communication is key. It's two way. We will give information out, but again, we can then receive information and neighborhood watch coordinators, a key to that. and also some of the PCSOs, individual to the wards, they post their own newsletters out.

Ideally I would love, we also have leaflets and posters again, outside the police station, containing different types of information. And we do leave them in public business areas as well. Because we're very mindful that not all of our community has access to the internet and mobile phones.

Cllr Jim Millard: Just circling back, before we finish, you were talking a bit about the volunteers who help with the Richmond Safe Space. I wonder just more widely, what is the role of local volunteers in supporting the Safer Neighbourhoods team and what impact do they have?

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: So volunteers are really key to a lot of work that we do, especially the engagement work.

the Metropolitan Police has its own volunteering and network group. So what we tend to do is when we're doing events or engagements, we will request volunteers to come and assist us and join us. And again, it's when we're talking to the community, not everybody feels confidence go up to a police officer or even a PCSO because of the uniform we wear.

And you know, and it's fair to say that, within social media, it's not off rendered at the moment in certain cases, but arguably we're human beings and we just want to talk to people. We want people to judge us on who we are as a person and potentially not everything they read. So the volunteers can break that barrier immediately.

And if a person speaks to a volunteer. It can then give them the confidence to say what they want to say, and then obviously then we can step in. And volunteers, we use them for leafleting, we use them for bike marking events, for walk and talks, and walk and talks are part of our violence against women and girls strategy.

These walks will be arranged and it's for female officers to meet female members of the community and just go for a walk and just have a conversation. It doesn't have to be all about policing, but again, to give them the confidence to, to come to the police, tell us what is happening. If you have concerns, if you're in fear, if there's areas, you know, of the community where you don't feel safe, we need to know.

and again, while I'm thinking about it, another good way of reporting any areas that people feel unsafe and is under street safe. it's anonymous and, you can, you fill in the questionnaire and that also goes to the council because we work closely with our council, safety team. And I should mention the brilliant work that they do, obviously, Kieran and, Lee, Zoe, Colin and, Ava, the community safety officers.

And. With Roger, with all our other key partners, this is why I feel that we are in a good position, as a collaborative effort, but there's still more we can do for our community, and again, please tell us, and please do volunteer and come and help us, because ultimately we're all working towards the same goal, and that is to keep everyone safe, so that anyone can go out and enjoy the beautiful Richmond, because it offers so much, and it's quite a unique place in London, I'm quite passionate about it.

Cllr Jim Millard: Well said, Jon. Well said, thank you so much.

Well I think we're getting towards the end of our time and I just wanted to ask if you had anything else you wanted to add. Roger, are there any upcoming events organised by the Safer Neighbourhoods Board that residents should know about?

Roger Metcalfe: The one event that I want to highlight that we've just recently done and was, supporting the, one of the latest new Met for London event, which was hosted at St Mary's University last year.

By, our own, newest member of the Safer Neighborhood Board, Professor Maria Mellons. It was very strongly supported by the police, very strongly attended by St. Mary's University students, and brilliantly facilitated by Professor Mellons. That kind of event, is Brilliant at bringing the community and the police and interested parties together, and I very much hope that we'll do more of that sort of thing next year, particularly as, as you've both been highlighting, the violence against women and girls and finding solutions to that, increasing their safety is so important.

I'm so full of admiration for the Council for aligning itself so strongly with everything that White Ribbon does, and for the nine councillors who are White Ribbon champions. that's the events we look forward to more in 2025.

Cllr Jim Millard: Well thank you so much, Roger and Jon, for joining us on Talk Richmond. It's, clear you're doing a huge amount of work, very effectively. The Safer Neighbourhoods Board and the Richmond and Twickenham Safer Neighbourhoods team play crucial roles in maintaining the safety and wellbeing of our community.

Thank you for joining us.

Inspector Jon McLoughlin: Thanks. Thank you for having me. Very pleasure.

Cllr Jim Millard: For those listening, please check the show notes for links to more information on how you can get involved and how you can report any issues you encounter. If you have any questions or concerns, please do email talk at richmond.gov.uk and we will do our best to help. Please do, as always, share this episode with friends and family and please do leave a review to help spread the word. It'd be a crime not to. I'm Jim Millard. Thanks very much for listening.