



*Chief Superintendent Elisabeth Chapple
South West BCU Commander*

Metropolitan Police Service
Wimbledon Police Station
15-23 Queens Road
Wimbledon SW19 8NN

Councillor Ross Garrod
Leader of the Council
London Borough of Merton

Sent by email

7th September 2022

Dear Councillor Garrod,

Thank you for your letter of 5th September and giving me the opportunity to answer the residents' concerns following the public meeting held on 1 September 2022.

I agree that this has been a tragic event that has deeply affected residents and the wider community and my thoughts are with everyone affected. It has been heartening to see the community pulling together and to see the support that all agencies have been able to provide. Alongside other relevant authorities, the Metropolitan Police will continue to do all we can to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation and to continue to support, together with the Council, those affected. Thank you for your partnership.

In order to make sure that I answer all of the concerns that are being raised by residents, I will provide explanations for each in turn. I am happy for you to share the contents of this letter with the residents of Galpin's Road. Please do not share this letter with a wider audience as it contains residents' personal information. As you may be aware, we are also speaking with relevant residents to answer their concerns directly.

1. Front doors being left open

[Redacted content]

[REDACTED]

The action that will be taken now is for one of my officers to work with the affected residents to discuss – and to get their consent to – additional specific security arrangements. These agreements will be documented and the affected residents will receive an apology for how the matter has been dealt with to date – and an explanation as to why this has occurred.

2. Body Worn Video (BWV)

We have commented above in relation to the current use of BWV. We are currently making some detailed enquiries as to whether it will be possible to release the BWV and if so what the process would be for each individual resident – we would want to make this as straight forward as possible. We are also in the process of confirming what the legislation relevant to showing footage permits so as to not breach the Data Protection Act (DPA) or, importantly, jeopardise the integrity of this investigation.

If it becomes possible for us to show residents the BWV footage of their homes, we will make every effort to make this happen. It is of the utmost importance that those affected by this tragic incident are supported with requests where possible and we will continue to do what we can to achieve this. We will write to you again on this matter shortly.

3. Seizure of personal items

I was made aware of the concern that a CCTV camera had been removed from a resident's property in the inner cordon by one of the officers that attended the meeting on September 1st. The officer mentioned that the person raising this concern was asked to stay behind and speak to them at the conclusion of the meeting but this did not happen and so no further details were known.

As a result of the concern being raised at the meeting, enquiries have been made with our investigations team. They are not aware of any CCTV systems being seized other than the footage from systems that has been discussed with residents prior to it being seized.

Therefore, if anyone is able to provide more detail as to which address/resident has had their CCTV seized, I would ask that they please let either you or I know the details so we can make further enquiries and get to the bottom of the issue.

4. SGN's presence in the inner cordon

To ensure I provide the most accurate information possible, I have spoken with the investigations team on this important matter – as to why SGN could have a presence within the inner cordon. They have let me have the following response:

"The investigation to determine the cause of the explosion in Galpins Road on 8th August 2022 is being led by the Metropolitan Police Service's Specialist Crime Command with support from the



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Health and Safety Executive. We share the community's desire for answers and are determined to complete an objective, independent and detailed enquiry.

The excavation and examination of the gas pipe in Galpins Road is a key part of the investigation. We understand how the presence of SGN during the extraction of the pipeline might cause concern. We are writing to explain why SGN need to be on site at the moment.

The Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996 dictate that the network operator (in this case SGN) conducts any works on the pipeline. Furthermore, due to the specialist and complex nature of the works being conducted, there is an extremely limited pool (of contractors) with the required skills and competence to carry out these works.

In order to ensure the integrity of the investigation, any work being undertaken by SGN is directed by the Police and HSE Inspectors who have technical oversight of the completion of each task. HSE Specialist Scientists are carrying out forensic examinations at each stage.

In addition, a range of further measures have been put in place by the Metropolitan Police Service to ensure that a detailed and robust investigation is being conducted."

I hope that the above information goes some way to allay the concerns that have been raised so far by residents and goes some way to reassuring them that we are doing everything we can to maintain the integrity of the investigation and the security of their homes. I appreciate that ongoing discussions on this topic are important for all.

We look forward to a continued dialogue with the residents to resolve any issues that may arise and again we wish to offer the residents assurance of our support.

Many thanks for raising these issues on behalf of the residents - your concern, and that of the London Borough of Merton Council, for the welfare and interests of residents, is clear. Please let me know if we can work together on any further matter being raised.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Superintendent Elisabeth Chapple
South West BCU Commander