

# West Bromwich Neighbourhood Policing Team

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*Entries in this publication generally relate to events that have occurred over the previous two weeks. Personal details of individuals related to our dealings are not disclosed, in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998). If you have any further queries, please email the team, and we will get back to you.*

## FIRE AT VACANT BUILDING CAUSES MAJOR DISRUPTION

On the morning of 25/08/2021, several reports were made to emergency services in regards to a large fire at 374 High Street, West Bromwich – the former West Bromwich Building Society site.

With a cloud of thick, black smoke being visible from the police station, available units from the neighbourhood team attended to assist fire with road closures and maintaining the scene, arriving at around 9:30am. Due to the size of the fire in the 6 storey building, and concerns over the building housing rough sleepers that may be trapped inside, a significant response from West Midlands Fire Service attended the location. At the busiest point, fifteen separate pumps were at the scene, with over fifty firefighters tackling the blaze.

It took several hours for the structure fire to be put out, due to the size of the building, the thick black smoke that limited visibility to almost zero, and the sheer heat inside the building. In parts of the building, temperatures of over 500 degrees were recorded – meaning that police and fire forensic investigators had to wait a substantial amount of time before entering the structure. Whilst West Midlands Ambulance Service were in attendance, thankfully, their services were not needed, as there were no injuries or casualties as a result of the blaze.

Fire Commander Samuels, commander at the scene, has confirmed that the cause of fire as arson, and is being investigated accordingly.



## AMENDMENTS TO PLANS FOR COLLEGE RETURN

Whilst we had initially hoped to have Project Guardian officers available in early September (for the return of college students in West Bromwich), a change in circumstances has meant that they are required elsewhere – meaning that the police presence will be almost entirely fronted by local officers.

However, the majority of our other plans remain unchanged. We are liaising with the town's educational establishments, with other partner agencies, along with local businesses, in order to provide reassurance - and establish any steps we can take to assist them. As part of this, we are planning to launch new schemes to try and engage with young people on the town centre, such as the launch of a new Streetwatch group, along with advertising local Police cadet groups. Not only will this prove to be a benefit for young people, but we expect it to also have a positive impact on the wider community.

**CRACKDOWN ON VEHICLES INVOLVED IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITY**

This seems to be a common theme in these newsletters- but in recent days, the team have seen fantastic results in their efforts to tackle vehicle-based offending in the area. From vehicles being driven without tax, to vehicles involved in drug dealing, all the way to stolen vehicles operating on false plates, we have seen it all! To put it into perspective, these are the vehicles recovered in the past 48 hours by the team, and the reasons for doing so:

A van was seized by officers on Thursday evening, after being stopped for travelling at speed – and officers discovered the male driving did not hold a valid insurance policy.

A car was also seized on Thursday evening, after officers observed it driving, in poor condition, past the police station. Checks showed that an insurance policy did not exist on the vehicle, and there were doubts over its roadworthiness. Checks showed that the driver did not hold a valid license, and after he was arrested for refusing to provide an address, a search of the vehicle yielded a notable quantity of class B drugs.

Earlier that afternoon, another car was also seized for being driven without a valid insurance policy, and checks conducted on the driver showed that he had no license.

The previous day, a car had been seized for causing an obstruction – after being parked in a particularly inconsiderate location.

Earlier in the week, a car was also recovered from Creed Way, after concerned residents reported a suspicious, damaged vehicle parked in a secluded location. Extensive checks by officers eventually identified the vehicle as stolen from Wales – however, this was no easy feat, given that the registration plates were cloned, and the VIN number had also been falsified. The vehicle was recovered as stolen, and items of interest were seized from the vehicle, after a Section 1 search was conducted.

**FUNERAL FOR MUCH-LOVED BIRMINGHAM POLICE OFFICER HELD IN WEST BROMWICH**

The funeral of a much-loved officer, PC Musa Muhammed, was held in West Bromwich on the afternoon of Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> August. PC Muhammed was an experienced and decorated response officer based in Newtown, Birmingham, passed away suddenly last Friday following a medical episode.

The turnout for PC Muhammed's funeral spoke volumes about his popularity. Along with West Midlands Police's Honour Guard, additional uniformed officers - as well as plain clothes officers, and wider friends and family - attended to pay tribute. The funeral procession to the West Bromwich registry office was lined by seventy uniformed officers, stood to attention as the procession passed. The Last Post was also played in his honour.

May he rest in peace.

