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Photo by Andrew Gray WL2013pirate_46 www.buyphotos.com.co.uk

It's a pirate's life for some

THE Treaty Centre in Hounslow held a half-term pirate day with a visit by a Captain Jack and entertainment from the Bread and Butter theatre pirates.

Captain Jack is pictured above with new recruit, Wail Hassan, six. **TURN TO PAGE FIVE FOR THE FULL STORY AND MORE PICTURES**

Number of officers set to double

BOROUGH: Police shake-up boosts local teams

by Robert Cumber
robert.cumber@trinitymirror.com

HOUNSLOW'S grassroots policing team is set to more than double in size over the next two years.

The borough's neighbourhood policing team, dedicated to fighting crime from the streets up, is due to increase from just 54 warranted officers today to 128 by 2015.

The extra officers will be a mixture of new recruits and existing staff transferring from back office roles as part of a major London-wide policing shake up.

Chief Inspector Rob Weir, responsible for partnership and neighbourhood policing in Hounslow, said the majority should be in place by this September.

Each of the borough's 20 wards will have a dedicated PC and PCSO, and eventually a sergeant, with the remaining officers providing floating

support as needed.

Hounslow town centre, which is the borough's biggest crime hot spot, will still have a team of 15 officers.

Four inspectors, each responsible for neighbourhood policing across five wards, are already in place.

"There will still be a dedicated public-facing PC and PCSO who really know the ward and its issues but there will be added flexibility to respond to problems bigger than those officers can deal with," said CI Weir.

Safer Neighbourhood Teams were introduced in 2006 and were originally meant to consist of a sergeant, two PCs and three PCSOs dedicated to fighting crime in their wards.

But the system was reviewed two years ago to make the teams more flexible, following concerns some low-crime areas were overstaffed while crime-ridden town centres often had too few

bobbies on the beat.

The total number of officers in Hounslow is set to increase from 472 to 546 in 2015 under the Mayor of London's Police and Crime Plan.

However, that is only slightly higher than the figure in May 2010, when the borough had 530 officers.

London Assembly member Murad Qureshi said he was not convinced by the promises in the latest policing plan, with police numbers across London having fallen by nearly 3,000 since May 2010 under Boris Johnson.

The changes will also see the closure of front counters at Feltham and Brentford police stations, with new contact points created at Feltham Police Station, Heston Library and Brentford's Cornish House, open from 6pm to 8pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and 2pm to 4pm on Saturdays.

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