

Unmesh Desai AM
Vice-Chair Police & Crime Committee

2nd March 2017

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Sophie Linden
Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime
The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
City Hall
The Queens Walk
London SE1 2AA



Dear Sophie

I am writing as the London Assembly Labour Group spokesperson on Police and Crime responding to the Draft Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021. As you know, Labour Members have contributed to the Assembly Police and Crime Committee's response to the Draft Police and Crime Plan, and the following comments should be read in conjunction with that response.

We welcome the plan and the scale of the ambition it has to improve policing and reduce crime in London. London is the standard-setter for policing in the UK and it is right that the *Police and Crime Plan 2017 - 2021* sets clear aspirations that reflect the challenge of policing our capital.

A better police service for London

We support the move to rebuild real neighbourhood policing and the deployment of at least two dedicated police officers and one PCSO in every ward. In 2013 Safer Neighbourhood Teams were reduced from one Sergeant, two PCs and three PCSOs per ward to just one PC and one PCSO per ward. At the time, we raised significant objections on behalf of our constituentsⁱ, who were rightly unhappy to see their local policing stripped back.

The PEEL: Police effectiveness 2016 report on the MPS also recognises the importance of neighbourhood policing and its impact in preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. It notes that an area for improvement for the MPS is ensuring "that local policing teams engage routinely, and work closely, with local communities" in order to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.ⁱⁱ

We are therefore, pleased to see Neighbourhood teams being rebuilt in this plan. Done well, we believe this move will help build police and community relations as well as increasing public confidence in the police.

The ring-fencing of these officers is particularly welcome as it offers the community continuity and allows officers to build relationships within their area.

We would like to see greater mention in the final Plan of what Londoners can expect from their dedicated Neighbourhood Officers, in terms of response and communication, and how they link with the rest of the Service. We would also like to see an assurance in the Plan that Neighbourhood Teams will have time to work resolve the more entrenched and complex problems within the communities they serve.

We welcome the move away for the MOPAC 7 targets set by the previous Police and Crime Plan. When these targets were introduced Labour Members argued that they were both arbitrary and overly simplistic. They risked setting perverse incentives for the Met and ignored more complex, high harm crimes. In 2016 the HMIC criticised the Met for having an ‘undue focus’ on MOPAC 7 crimes while matters of child protection were given a ‘lack of priority’.ⁱⁱⁱ It is welcome that MOPAC have learnt from this and are moving away from this form of measurement.

We look forward to understanding how MOPAC proposes to ‘measure success’ under this new model. We would like to see an assurance in the Plan that all information regarding local and London-wide crime priorities will be released in a transparent and understandable format and also in a timely manner.

Community engagement and trust

The Draft Plan rightly recognises that building trust and confidence in our police is key to successfully policing London^{iv}. According the Met’s own *Drivers of Confidence* model^v *Engagement with the Local Community* is vital to ensure that Londoners trust their police. It is therefore no surprise to us that 71% of respondents to MOPAC’s Talk London survey “think it is important that they are able to influence decisions about Neighbourhood Policing”^{vi}. Londoners want to feel that the Met is reflecting their priorities and understands the issues in their locality. For this reason we are supportive of ‘local priority setting’ for Neighbourhood Policing that is outlined in the Draft Plan.

However, we are concerned that the community engagement for this local priority setting is not robust enough. At a time when police have reduced resources any disconnection from the public cannot be good. In these straightened times it is more important than ever that the police have the public on side.

Our constituents need to understand priorities in their area but we feel that they should have the opportunity to input into them at the Borough level. The proposed system of setting priorities between the local Borough Commander and the local council feels top-down. We recommend that MOPAC look seriously at ways it can involve local people in this process as a tool to drive confidence in policing.

We also have some concerns regarding the indication that priorities would be set annually. While we understand the need to assess consistently whether our priorities are the right, we would like assurance that an annual setting of priorities will not have a destabilising effect on the work of the Met and that priorities will be given sufficient time to bed-in.

We note with surprise that the proposed Borough Mergers, which are currently being trialled, are given such little mention in the Plan as we understand both the Met and MOPAC are

keen to press ahead with them. While we understand the motivations behind this restructure it is the case that these mergers are a significant departure from Borough policing model and will clearly have a significant impact on the policing of London going forward. From the Draft Plan we are not clear whether the Met and MOPAC feel that this change should bring with it new ways of working and, if so, what those new ways of working would be. The Draft Plan raises more questions for residents than it answers. Questions such as the following need answering: what can Londoners expect the relationship with the Local Authorities will look like?; whether entire units of central policing functions will move to the new areas or just representative officers?; and crucially, what local partners and residents can expect from these changes? We would like to see this area much more developed in the final Plan as at the moment it seems to be a significant omission, as these are the questions our constituents will be asking us.

Trust from the local community will be particularly important when the proposed Borough-mergers take place. We therefore urge MOPAC to have thorough and wide-ranging consultation before introducing these mergers and will look for real input from the Londoners, while explaining the new structure and how they can expect the changes to affect them.

It is vital that MOPAC learns lessons from previous consultations under the last administration. MOPAC must ensure that: the public are given a decent amount of notice before meetings are held; that notice is given as widely as possible through community links such as local schools, churches, residents groups etc.; and that in the meetings the public are both facilitated to give their opinion and are listened to. This kind of engagement is most important in BAME communities and among young people, where trust in the police is particularly low.

Safer Neighbourhood Boards have been and are a key resource for community engagement. However they have now been in place for three years, and it seems sensible to look at their role and refresh them if that is felt necessary. As part of any review their powers and authority should be clarified to ensure that they are able to work as effectively as possible and that they are given the support they need to deliver.

We believe that the plan should have a section that sets out MOPAC's community engagement policy which should explain how it will work with the local community to ensure that policing reflects the priorities they have in their locality, and helps build confidence and support for the police across all the communities of London.

A better criminal justice service for London

The focus on the victims of crime is welcome. We believe that the Victims Commissioner can play a strong role in improving the experiences of victims of crime in London.

We particularly welcome the ambition to reduce both repeat offending and repeat victimisation in the Plan; and that MOPAC is striving to take a multi-agency approach to this reduction.

We feel that the devolution of the criminal justice service to London would play a major part in enabling MOPAC to tackle this issue and would like to offer our support to the Mayor in lobbying government for these powers.

However, we would like to see a better recognition of victim and offender profiles in cases of Child Sexual Exploitation in the Plan. We know that over half the CSE cases in London are peer-on-peer. Every child involved in these needs a child protection response. During the MOPAC Justice Matters challenge we heard from the Met that very often in these 'chaotic and challenging scenarios' the investigating officer does not think "beyond what is presented before them". MOPAC must challenge the Met to think about how they see children in these scenarios and look at ways in which this reality can be better addressed.^{vii}

Tackling High Harm and Complex Crime

The emphasis within the Draft Police and Crime plan on high risk, high harm crimes is right, as is the decision to include them as London-wide priorities.

The Labour Group fully supports the focus on children and young people, tackling violence against women and girls, the priority given to knife crime and tackling extremism, hatred and intolerance.

The analysis in these areas of the plan is both thoughtful and well-developed, however, we would like to see more in the following areas:

We are concerned about the move to "bring together specialist officers into [the merged Boroughs], strengthening their capacity to investigate serious crimes and support victims"^{viii} and would like to see the analysis behind it. The Met cannot return to a piecemeal, postcode-lottery approach days that led to the failings of the Southwark Sapphire Unit^{ix}. There needs to be assurance of consistency of quality of leadership across the Met.

While we understand the funding challenges the Met find themselves faced with, we are concerned about the lack of analysts available to the Met, particularly in areas of high harm, complex crime such as child protection. We would like to see more commitment from MOPAC to fully equip the Met in this area.

We are also very concerned about the on-going lack of detectives within the Met^x. We would like to see more consideration in the Police and Crime plan about how MOPAC intends to support the Met to close the gaps in these areas.

With the strain on police funding it is also vital that the Metropolitan Police continues its work in fighting corruption within the service wherever it is found. In London, we know all too well the consequences of even one corrupt officer or staff member within the force. We would like to see a commitment in the final Police and Crime Plan to supporting the anti-corruption units within the Met and ensuring that these teams are properly resourced to carry out their work.

On tackling hatred and intolerance, we would like to see a greater commitment from MOPAC to work with partner agencies, such as TfL, BTP and the GLA, to inform Londoners about Hate Crime; both what it is and how to report it. We believe that Project Guardian could be used as a model for such a campaign.

We welcome the approach to tackling knife crime within the Draft Plan. Knife crime with injury has been rising year on year since 2013 and rose 10% in the last year alone. This crime blights the lives of too many families in our city and we need an ambitious approach to tackle it. We welcome this Plan's focus on prevention, intervention and enforcement. We hope that MOPAC will use the opportunity that developing a knife crime strategy will bring to look widely across the UK and further, to get examples of successful practice that could be used in London. As part of any strategy we also hope that previously successful schemes such as 'knife amnesties' will continue, so that knives can be taken out of circulation. The commitment to more police officers working with schools will help support early intervention to try to prevent the carrying of knives.

Funding

It is of huge concern to us that the ambitions of the Police and Crime Plan could be thwarted by under-funding from the current Government. The MPS is already being forced to make savings of £420m by 2020/21. This, in itself is a challenging target.

Added to this the upcoming changes to the National Police Funding Formula add huge uncertainty to the policing budget. Former Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe has warned that the force would have to carry out its crime fighting duties "slower and worse" if the budget is reduced significantly in a Home Office shake-up of funding.^{xi}

It is, therefore, of great concern that despite Home Office recognition that London needs £281m from the National, International and Capital City Grant that we only receive £174m, a funding gap of over £100m.

We also believe in a "polluter pays" principle, so that organisations that rely heavily on the Met for a presence at their commercial events, such as Premier League football clubs, should pay the full cost the Met incurred by providing the policing function.

We continue to offer our support to the Mayor in making London's case to government to make sure our police service gets the funding it deserves

Yours sincerely,

Unmesh Desai AM
Member for City & East London

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- ⁱ Joanne McCartney AM; Response to the Draft Police and Crime Plan 2012- 2017; 06.03.2016
- ⁱⁱ Justice Inspectorates; [HMIC Peel Report Police Effectiveness](#); Metropolitan Police 2016; March 2017
- ⁱⁱⁱ HMIC National Child Protection Inspection; Metropolitan Police ; December 2016
- ^{iv} Draft Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021, p11
- ^v The MPS website; [Public Confidence in Policing London](#); Retrieved 21.02.2017
- ^{vi} London.gov.uk; [Your Views on Policing and Crime](#); Retrieved 28.02.17
- ^{vii} MOPAC; [Justice Matters Challenge Meeting](#); Evidence of Martin Hewitt; November 2016
- ^{viii} Draft Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021, page 18
- ^{ix} “[Met Police's Sapphire rape units face shake-up](#)”; BBC; 26 April 2013
- ^x Justice Inspectorates; [HMIC Peel Report Police Effectiveness](#); Metropolitan Police 2016; March 2017
- ^{xi} Evening Standard; [Met may have to cut thousands of police and 'ration' services if budgets are slashed, says Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe](#); 16th February 2017