



Metropolitan Police Authority

The buck stops... where? Royal Suite, Ground floor

Accountability and redress

Speakers:

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- Thank you and welcome. First can I give sincere apologies on behalf of Kit Malthouse Vice Chairman of the MPA and Deputy Mayor for Policing, who has an important family matter to attend to and has asked me to fill his shoes.
- This time last year, Boris Johnson had just taken over as Chair of the MPA and I had been on the Authority, as a newly elected Conservative Member, since the May election.
- The Mayoral election in 2008 has had an historical impact on policing in London, not least because the Mayor is now Chair of the police authority. He was elected on the second biggest personal vote in Europe, and with a clear mandate to fight crime. So I am here today to discuss how the MPA have responded to this, our plans for the future and the role a visible police authority can play in redressing the balance between local accountability, the Home Office and the police.
- I think it's fair to say that in the past year the MPA has raised its profile. There have been the obvious headline grabbers, the departure of high profile individuals, subsequent publication of memoirs and the 'hand on the tiller' debate. But behind all this, for Londoners, is our vision on how we, as the MPA will work with the

Commissioner and Londoners to lead the Met's fight against crime.

- When Kit Malthouse first arrived at the MPA in May last year he was reading its priorities set out in the meeting room and was shocked that the word crime didn't figure! For him and new members, like me, this was an absurd omission. As a member of the police authority my first priority has to be to ensure that Londoners have a police force that is resourced and supported to fight crime on our streets and make London safer.
- In the past MPA Members made some notable achievements; particularly in establishing budgetary controls and financial discipline. There were some excellent policy reviews, and introducing a sense that the Met were accountable after 180 years was no mean achievement. But when **we** came in, we felt we had to address the fact that there wasn't enough focus on fighting crime.
- And so the new Authority developed Met Forward, which you should all have a summary of this morning.
- Met Forward is a strategic framework on how the Authority wants the Met to develop and perform in the years to come. As you can see from the screen it has eight strands covering all the vital areas of London policing.
- Through Met Forward we have set out to address the crime issues that concern Londoners most. Knife crime and serious youth violence, dogs as weapons and safer transport. We have introduced crime mapping to London, Joint Engagement Meetings with local authorities and police across the London boroughs; and our own, no nonsense, crime statistics, easy to read and keeping the same definitions over the next three years so that

Londoners can simply and accurately assess whether crime is moving up or down.

- I have been asked today to discuss police accountability and public redress. I don't know about you, but I am a bit baffled by the term 'redress' in this context. To me that means financial compensation but I'll come back to this later. Let's look first at accountability.
- Met Forward is a significant development in visible, clear accountability for the police in London. However, I cannot discuss police accountability without addressing the current national debate, particularly the ACPO debate over politics, democracy and policing. Should politicians get involved in policing?
- Among other things, Sir Hugh Orde said last Friday,
- "We (the police) should not be influenced by anyone who has any potential or suggestion for a political bias."
- Let me break this down. He is saying that a proper democratic society is one that has no political input. What is democracy if not a system of government where elected politicians make political decisions to carry out the wishes of the people who elected them? For instance, **our** wish to cut crime or make the streets safer?
- As an elected representative on the GLA, a local councillor and link police authority member for Kensington and Chelsea, I take serious issue with this position. It is precisely because we are a democratic society that the people of London elect me, and people outside London elect other colleagues to make sure that their interests are represented. And it is directly through the political process that we, as police authorities, are fully accountable as "fierce advocates", democratically working to set the policing priorities for our local area.

- Ultimately in London **the buck stops with the Mayor, Boris Johnson!**
- This doesn't mean that Boris Johnson as Chair of the MPA runs the Met. It doesn't mean as link member for K&C I directly task the borough commander. The Commissioner runs the Met and the Chief Superintendent runs the operational command unit. Just as a local councillor I would not direct a Head Teacher of a school or the manager of a child protection team; that is direct political interference in public service delivery.
- But to say that politics should be, or ever has been, absent from policing is naïve and unconstitutional. **This is not a party political issue, it's a democratic issue.** No one is above the law and no one is above democracy.
- The Mayor, like many of us here today, was elected on a crime and public service manifesto and the taxpayers of London, Gloucestershire, Greater Manchester, Nottingham or wherever, expect us, the politicians, to deliver safe and secure streets on their behalf.
- On this basis, as authority members, moving forward, we must be confident and clear by what we mean by holding chief constables to account and securing effective and efficient policing for our areas. And we must **challenge** the notion that it is not our job to establish the policing priorities for our area or to question operational policy on the grounds that this is too political and 'undemocratic'.
- As Rob and colleagues have outlined, we await the publication of the government's White Paper and Stephen is kindly here this morning to discuss the government views on police accountability and public redress.

- Before we hear from Stephen, though I think it's important to stress to the Home Office what we need and don't need from another White Paper. Authorities have **plenty** of statutory powers – both to deliver accountable policing and enable partnership working. What we need now from the Home Office is **support**. Support to help us to deliver our functions as best we can.
- We need a Home Office that respects authorities, as democratic and independent representatives of the public and consults us as equals in the policing tripartite. Yes there is room for us to improve - none of us here would deny that, but improvement through support. So when an authority steps up to set its strategy, and to be more involved in developing the policing plan, or challenge its force on policy direction and performance – let's hear an encouraging voice from the Home Office.

Visibility and redress

- Finally, let me turn to visibility and public redress.
- Police authorities are in touch with the people that the force serves. We were set up to do this. I would like to ask what would be the added value of establishing 'redress' or 'compensation' or more channels for general complaint to the IPCC and the Inspectorate? Let's not confuse the public even more.
- The IPCC has a very important and specific role in respect of complaints: they should not get distracted by dealing with general dissatisfaction or failure to deliver on the policing pledge. **We can do that**. In fact at the MPA, we have already seen a significant increase in our postbag.
- And the Inspectorate has plenty to occupy itself in carrying out inspections: leave it to **us** to be the 'fierce advocate' of

the public. **Half** of us were elected by the public, and **all** of us have a statutory duty to engage with the public, and take account of what they need and want.

- Let's hope the long awaited White Paper keeps all these roles distinct!
- I think most of us here would agree with the Home Office that an invisible police authority does little to help drive up performance and public confidence in the police service. But we are all working to address this.
- In London, for once, this job is actually easier. The public know that Boris Johnson holds Sir Paul Stephenson to account. Now, through Met Forward, we have set out for Londoners, a clear vision for crime fighting for the next three years.
- In London we are the body that, independent of the police, will ensure that there is redress for the public. We've been doing that already, addressing clear systematic failures, such as G20, Stockwell and the death of Baby Peter. We are taking action under our constitutional framework to drive change and make real improvements in fighting crime for the people of London.
- This is an important debate, and I have tried to be reasonably controversial so that we have an energetic discussion. I would like to thank the APA for inviting the MPA to speak on this topic. I will now hand over to Stephen Rimmer, who will, no doubt, add some important context on **where the buck stops** from a Home Office perspective.
- Thank you.