

London Assembly Police and Crime Committee - Wednesday 26 May 2021**Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Confirmation Hearing in Respect of the Appointment to the Office of Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime**

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): This brings us to item 4, the confirmation hearing in respect of the appointment of the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime. I welcome Sophie Linden, the Mayor's nominee, to this meeting. The Committee will be putting questions to Sophie in relation to her proposed appointment. However, can I first ask Members to note the background information circulated within the agenda for this meeting?

All: Noted.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): And to note the information which was received after the publication of the agenda and which has been circulated to Members separately?

All: Noted.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Thank you. We will now move on to the question-and-answer session, with the lead-off question coming from me. For those who are new to the Committee, it is a tradition on our London Assembly Committees that the Chairman will ask the first question.

Before I do that, I would like to say that it is a real honour to chair the Police and Crime Committee because, of course, for many Londoners, crime is the single most important issue that needs to be solved. The safety of people in their homes and on the streets is very important. It is the job of the Mayor and indeed the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to keep our streets of London safe. I wish the administration well in this regard. It is the job of this Committee, of course, to scrutinise the actions of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime on behalf of Londoners, which we will do. Thank you for that.

Sophie, it is good to see you. I am going to ask the lead-off question. Can you please outline what you have achieved over the last five years that makes you the ideal candidate to be reappointed to this role?

Sophie Linden: Thank you very much. Congratulations on becoming Chairman of the Police and Crime Committee. I absolutely agree with you that the number one priority of any mayoralty is keeping Londoners safe, and as safe as possible. Always over the last five years, as I said at the last Police and Crime Committee [meeting], coming to the Police and Crime Committees has been a challenge, but I absolutely understand and respect the need for scrutiny. I believe really good scrutiny does improve and develop policy and improve and develop the delivery of safety in London as well. I welcome you to your post, Shaun.

In relation to what I have done over the last five years and what the mayoralty has done over the last five years to ensure that London is safer, I would like to point to a few things. It has been five years. It has been a long time. We must remember the challenges that London has faced over the last five years, not just the challenge of reducing public spending and not just around policing, but also local authorities and the services that help and support to prevent crime, and also the challenges of rising violence and rising crime. Crime was already rising for the last four years and violence for the last two years before I took office in 2016. Of course, in 2017 we had the terrible terrorist attacks in London and real challenges around them.

With that as the context for the work that the Mayor and I have been doing, I am really extremely proud of our record. The Mayor and I have invested record amounts in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), over £1 billion, which has meant that there are an additional 1,300 police officers on the streets of London today that could not have otherwise been afforded. I am very proud of that record. That has made a real impact on policing in London.

In relation to the other responsibilities that I have as Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, one of those responsibilities is overseeing the investment of over £50 million per year in victim services and crime prevention. I am really proud of the London Victim and Witness Service, which we recommissioned and launched. Not only is it a better service with specific provision and culturally-specific providers within it to make sure that all Londoners who are victims of crime have the services that they need. It is also a service that is probably the most joined-up victim and witness service in the country. Through the work and collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, and the work we did when asking for more devolution, we had the pre-court victim service devolved down to us. Victims have a much better, more seamless service provided to them if they are taking their cases to court. I am really proud of that service.

I am also really proud of the fact that the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) led on the mayoral priority of tackling violence. We led in terms of publishing a Knife Crime Strategy and then developing from the Knife Crime Strategy to setting up the first Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in the country. I am really proud of that VRU. It was needed. It is already having an impact and it is taking that absolute focus of a public health approach to tackling violence, working alongside the MPS, investing in prevention and early intervention. Its work so far has ensured that over 80,000 young, vulnerable Londoners have had preventative services, support and diversion. That is on top of the Mayor's Young Londoners Fund, as well.

The third thing I would like to point to in terms of my record over the last five years - and it is a statutory responsibility for me and the Mayor - is holding the MPS to account. We have done that robustly and rigorously, while also supporting the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis [Cressida Dick DBE QPM] and her senior leadership team and, really importantly, supporting and celebrating the work of the MPS frontline officers. One of the best things about my job - and during COVID it was the thing I missed the most - is being able to get out and about with frontline police officers to support them, to understand their work and also to ensure that they know that the Mayor is beside them and that we celebrate the fact that we have the best police service in the world.

MOPAC's oversight of the MPS has led to, for example, the overhaul and the review of the MPS's Gangs Matrix. That was a really important piece of work that not only ensured that working alongside the Information Commissioner's office, the MPS is using its data in relation to the Gangs Matrix in a legal way, but also ensured that over 1,000 young people who had not shown any signs of being a member of a gang or of being at risk of becoming a member of a gang were removed from the Gangs Matrix. That was an important piece of work.

The last bit about the oversight that I would like to point to is in relation to my record. When I took up my post in 2016, we had a series of interim chief finance officers. MOPAC was not strong enough on its statutory responsibility to oversee the efficiency and effectiveness of the MPS. I have worked with the chief executives of MOPAC to build up the financial oversight of the MPS. We now have really robust, improved financial oversight of the MPS, enacted monthly through investment advisory meetings and every single day working with our Chief Finance Officer alongside the MPS to ensure that we set their priorities and the budgets behind them. We also ensure that the decisions and the multimillion-pound contracts that the MPS - because of its

size – has to engage with are well scrutinised. The independent reports from Development Assistance Research Associates show that there has been an improvement in the efficiency, the governance and the financial arrangements of the MPS.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Thank you. You made a comment about the Knife Crime Strategy – my recollection is that the Knife Crime Strategy was slow to be published. What have you learned over the last five years that will give us a speedier response going forward? Will we get another Knife Crime Strategy? Will it be the same and just extended? What will change?

Sophie Linden: As you know, the VRU has its strategy, its priorities and its work programme. That is the public health approach to delivering in relation to tackling violence.

When we published the Knife Crime Strategy – and this is incredibly important and I do not make any apology for this – we took time to consult not just professional bodies and the normal statutory stakeholders, but also communities and young people. Because of that, we had a very comprehensive Knife Crime Strategy, which we developed, and then set up the VRU.

I make no apology for the fact that we consulted, because one of the other statutory functions of MOPAC and me in my position is to ensure that the voice of the community is brought not just to City Hall, but also to the MPS. I took that very seriously at the beginning to ensure that MOPAC and City Hall were engaging with young people who are already, or at the cusp of, getting involved in violence and using knives. For example, I visited Isis Prison and talked to young men who were already in prison for committing knife offences and violence.

Unmesh Desai AM: Sophie, in your supporting statement for this confirmation hearing, you talk about, and I quote, “One of the key roles of the DMPC [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] is to hold the MPS to account”. In that context, can you tell the Committee about your experiences in setting the direction for the MPS and challenging the organisation to improve where necessary?

Sophie Linden: As I said in my opening statement, I take the responsibility of overseeing the MPS and holding the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to account really seriously. I do that in a number of ways and I would like to continue to do that in the next three years of this mayoralty.

One of the things that we do on a regular basis is have a quarterly Oversight Board. During the course of the last mayoralty, we have implemented publishing quarterly performance reports, which not only give transparency and accountability for Londoners as to how the MPS is faring, not just in relation to their finances, but also in relation to the priorities that are set out in the Police and Crime Plan. That quarterly performance report forms the basis of a quarterly oversight meeting where the directors of MOPAC and I hold the Commissioner and her senior management team to account. The quarterly performance report is one way of holding the MPS to account.

Alongside that, we have regular issues that come back to the Oversight Board. For example, on an annual basis, we look at and scrutinise the use-of-force statistics. The use-of-force statistics are incredibly important in terms of trust and confidence in the MPS for Londoners and the community, to have a real understanding of when officers on the front line are using force. We all know from the Action Plan and the work we did on that that there was a real concern that handcuffing became too much of a norm for police officers when they stopped and searched young black Londoners. Use of force has regularly come back; community engagement has regularly come back to ensure that we have oversight of the Community Engagement Strategy of the MPS

and also challenge them. How do they know they are reaching out to those communities that they need to reach out to? This is not just about the number of engagements. It is about the quality of the engagements and also understanding which parts of the community they are not engaging with. That has been part of our discussions at the Oversight Board.

I mentioned already that, aside from the Oversight Board, we have reviewed the Gangs Matrix. That was a particular piece of work around oversight. It was a ground-breaking piece of research. It certainly had ground-breaking research in it in relation to understanding whether the Gangs Matrix was effective. We were able, through that research, to point out where things needed to improve, but we were also able to show that the Gangs Matrix was being effective. It was bringing down victimisation and it was also bringing down offending.

Those are two examples of how I hold the MPS to account, but MOPAC as an organisation also works as part of oversight. One of the things that the new chief executive has done - and you have asked me about this through the Police and Crime Committee previously - is a restructure, which is just bedding in and settling down. That has strengthened our oversight capacity. We have put in a head of operational oversight in the MPS. Going forward, that is going to improve even more.

Another example of oversight would be through our independent custody visitors. We have a statutory responsibility to provide the independent custody visitors, and we do that. We have training. We have good engagement and relationships with those independent custody visitors. For example, one of the things that they did during the pandemic was a fantastic piece of work. Some of them were able to go into custody. Some of them were not and did it virtually. They were able to highlight an issue around remote access to legal advice during the pandemic. That is part of our oversight.

From me, to the Chief Executive and directors and officers in MOPAC, we are taking part in scrutiny of the MPS on a daily basis.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you. A very important part of your job, it goes without saying, is working with the Home Office. How do you work with the Home Office and speak up for London's needs? We talked earlier about setting budgets. That is one area where you are obviously going to work with the Home Office; not the only area, but a very important area. Give us some examples of how you work with the Home Office and articulate the needs of London and Londoners in terms of keeping them safe.

Sophie Linden: I will give you two examples of that. One of them is around funding. I know the Committee in the previous administration was very supportive of the Mayor's and my asks of the Home Office and the Home Secretary [The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP] in relation to police officer funding. I know the previous Chairman [of the Police and Crime Committee], Steve O'Connell [former Assembly Member], wrote on the Committee's behalf in relation to funding not only of police officers, but also the National and International Capital Cities grant. That is one part. That is being done on a formal basis via letter writing and lobbying, but it is also done on a regular basis with fairly regular meetings with the Minister for Crime and Policing [Kit Malthouse MP] to go through the finances - not in heavy detail - of the MPS and to put the case in relation to how many police officers the MPS needs in order to be able to meet the needs and the crime challenges of London.

The other way in which I engage regularly with the Home Office is through those meetings with Home Office Ministers. For example, I have a very good relationship with Victoria Atkins [MP]. The Victims Commissioner and I have had regular meetings with her in her role as Minister for Safeguarding and Vulnerability, for

example, on the Domestic Abuse Bill. We have had a really constructive relationship working with officials in the Home Office and also with Ministers in the Home Office to put the case as to what we want to have in the Domestic Abuse Bill. Progress has been made. There are things in the Domestic Abuse Bill, for example, around children and witnesses of domestic violence that are now there because of the constructive relationship we have with Ministers, in particular with Victoria Atkins [MP].

Unmesh Desai AM: Chairman, I am conscious of the time. We are limited to two hours and I know there are lots and lots of questions. I will stop at this stage.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): We will return to that in our sessions going along the year.

Léonie Cooper AM: It is good to see you, Sophie, before us today. You were talking a little bit earlier on about the main challenges for you during your time as the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and you referred to some of the external things that City Hall has come up against since 2016. You then moved on, in answer to Assembly Member Desai, to talk about the context and the relationship with the Home Office.

One of the things that has been a challenge has been the removal of £850 million from the budget of the MPS in the last ten years. You mentioned the National and International Capital Cities grant, which is still underfunded to the tune of £170 million. One of the things that I want to see with perhaps some more success than was achieved in the previous five years is pressing the Government for a fairer funding deal for London.

Is that going to be on your agenda, and why have we so far not been able to make any inroads into something that even the Home Office itself admits it is underfunding for us?

Sophie Linden: It is on the agenda, absolutely, to ensure that the MPS in London gets its fair share, and the National and International Capital Cities grant is going to continue to be an issue. We are about £159 million underfunded and those figures, as we all know, are verified, independent figures, not from City Hall. Yes, it is absolutely going to still be on the agenda to ensure that the MPS gets the funding it needs. The Mayor has backed and supported the Commissioner in her calls that, of the 20,000 additional police officers that are coming in nationally, the MPS should get 6,000. In the last two allocations, we have fallen short of that. In the next allocation, we will still continue to press for that allocation of police officers. It is really important because London's population is rising, the challenges and the complexities of the challenges are increasing, and also of course because we are a capital city.

Over the last five years, we have lobbied very significantly for additional police officers and additional funding for the MPS. We have been successful. I am really pleased that the Government, belatedly, has accepted that police officer numbers do matter and that funding for the MPS does matter. We have seen a turnaround from the Government. I really welcome that, and I want to work with the Government to ensure that police officer numbers do come to London and also that they are effective. How can we work together to ensure that not only are we getting police officer numbers but we are working really collaboratively to ensure that London is safer?

Léonie Cooper AM: How confident are you that we are going to get up to the 6,000 officers that would be a fair share of that allocation of 20,000 that the Government promised in late 2019? Some people are now calling for 8,000 additional officers. How confident are you that the Home Office is going to support London's call, your call and the call from the Commissioner to have either 6,000 or 8,000 extra officers? We are not really anywhere near that at the moment, are we?

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Can I just say at this point that I do not believe that has much to do with Sophie's appointment.

Léonie Cooper AM: This very much goes to the point of what the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime can achieve and I want to hear what she is going to be talking to the Home Office about, if you do not mind, Chairman.

Sophie Linden: At the moment, in terms of the two allocations of funding for police officers to the MPS, we are just below about 3,000 additional officers. In the next year, we need that to double. That is going to be quite a stretch for the Government. I do understand the predicament. It has said 20,000 officers for the whole of the country. If it then gives the MPS 3,000, they will be taken from elsewhere and everywhere in the country has suffered because of police cutbacks.

We will continue to make that case and we will continue to make it in a collaborative way because I know - and the Home Office Ministers know - that if we are going to succeed in bringing violent crime down in the country, we need to bring violent crime down in London, so we need to have the proper resources in London.

We also know - and you may well come on to questions about this and I am sure we will talk about it in other Police and Crime Committee sessions - that one of the things that London does is export crime and criminality through county lines. I have had conversations with Ministers about this. If we want to succeed in the country, we need to succeed in London. That is the same not just economically, but also for crime. If we look at county lines, London is an exporter of criminality and vulnerability. Many forces and areas outside London want and need London to really get the drugs markets under control and to really be ensuring that we are supporting those young people out of their vulnerable positions so that they are not going outside of London and we are not exporting criminality.

Marina Ahmad AM: Hello, Sophie. Given what you have explained in previous answers, with the background of the £850 million shortfall in funding over the last five years, the £159 million continuing shortfall that you have just identified, the cuts to police officer numbers with the 6,000 that have been cut in London, and also the cuts to local authority support services, could you identify what you think your biggest success has been in respect of crime, policing and community safety for London over the last five years?

Sophie Linden: One of the things that I am most proud of comes back to the county lines issues in relation to the work that MOPAC and I have led. They were difficult decisions at the time. As you know, over the last four or five years, there has been £72 million of investment from MOPAC into the London Crime Prevention Fund.

I took a difficult decision at the beginning of the mayoral term and the beginning of my tenure as Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to top-slice that by 30%. It was difficult and I had lots of difficult conversations with boroughs about that, but that enabled us to set up some different services that went right across London. One of the services we set up was the Rescue and Response Service, which I am really proud of. It has tried to support over 150 young people out of county lines. It has gone and rescued about 70 young people. I am really proud of that. That does make a difference in relation to crime on the streets of London. If you are working to support young people to come out of criminality, the criminality they are involved with there is really dangerous and makes them very vulnerable, then you are ensuring that we are getting safer streets in London.

The other major area that I am very proud of over the last five years, which is a real indication of the commitment the Mayor and I have, is how we have worked to tackle violence against women and girls and how we have worked to invest in services that support victims, with over £60 million of investment, record amounts for supporting victims, and also the fact that we have been successful in bidding for money from the Home Office and the Government to get more Independent Sexual Violence Advocates into London and more Independent Domestic Violence Advocates into London.

Really importantly for me, we were successful in bidding to get money which we have also invested to tackle the behaviour of domestic violence perpetrators and those men who are committing domestic violence. We have set up the Drive programme in Croydon and then it has been rolled out to two other boroughs as well. I am really proud of that.

When you look at what we have done in relation to violence against women and girls, there is a lot more to be done. One of my priorities in the next term will be to tackle violence against women and girls in the public space. We have a lot of work to do there, but we also have a good record to build on. We are investing in services to support women and we are also investing in trying to change the behaviour of men.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you for that comprehensive answer. Given what you have identified as considerable successes over the last five years, could I ask, to continue those successes and build on the work that you have identified, what kind of support do you need from the Government to enable that to happen?

Sophie Linden: If you take tackling violence on the streets of London, we will build on the work that we have already undertaken. That will be building on the VRU and the early intervention and prevention work there and the investment there, and also building on the work we are doing in the MPS. Mayoral funding enabled them to set up the Violent Crime Task Force. Last week, with Kit Malthouse [MP], the Policing Minister, I visited the Violence Suppression Units, which every borough has and which are about finding and arresting the most violent perpetrators, domestic violence perpetrators as well as other types of violence. We will build on that work with an absolutely laser-like focus on tackling violence from the MPS and from us across City Hall.

What we need from the Government – and I know from the discussions I have with Policing Ministers that they are also absolutely committed to the VRU and committed to the real focus on violence – is long-term sustainable funding; not just annual budgets and annual allocations, because that makes it very difficult to plan. It makes it very difficult to invest in community support groups and also, for the statutory partners, it makes life a lot more difficult. We need real long-term commitment to funding.

Also, in the way that we have done in City Hall, how can we work collaboratively across all the different departments so that we have that focus not just from the Home Office, but also from the Ministry of Justice and the whole of the criminal justice service on tackling violence. Those are discussions that I know from my discussions already with Ministers are knocking at an open door. We want to collaborate on that.

Nicholas Rogers AM: Could I jump in with a question at this point?

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Yes. Just before I take that, we are at risk of making this a Police and Crime Committee about everything other than the reappointment or not of Sophie. I would just like to suggest we focus a little bit more on what Sophie's plans are, what Sophie's experience is and what Sophie has to offer the position as opposed to the global policing challenge that we have here in London.

Nicholas Rogers AM: In that spirit, Sophie, I hope you will agree that it is important, in such a high-profile role, to have a high level of self-awareness. This question addressed your biggest success. To address the flipside, what would you say is the biggest area for personal improvement in your role as Deputy Mayor?

Sophie Linden: That is a good question. That is a proper interview question. I have reflected on that in terms of the last five years and have reflected on what I will do differently. One of the things – and I hope you can see this for those who were members of the Committee before – is that I have certainly done my preparation and paperwork very differently for this confirmation hearing. I have certainly done that very differently.

One of the things in terms of what I need to improve on over the next couple of years is about really being less in City Hall and more out in the communities, and finding more time to ensure that I am engaging with Londoners. One of the risks of this job is that you can be in City Hall too much, you can be in Whitehall too often and you can be in the Home Office too often. You actually also need to be absolutely embedded and grounded in London and Londoners. That, for me, is one of the areas that I have been thinking about coming back in and continuing the role as Deputy Mayor. That is an area to develop and to build on.

Nicholas Rogers AM: What is your plan for that? How will you achieve that?

Sophie Linden: What I will do is what I did last time – and we did it in very quick succession and, looking back, it reset the relationship between the MPS and boroughs and between MOPAC and boroughs – which is to make sure that we go out and visit, and we engage with local leaders and we engage with the community. We did that last time. We visited the 32 boroughs. I went with a senior member of the MPS management board to do that.

I am not saying that I am going to do that in such quick succession, but that is certainly one of the things I want to do. I want to make sure that I go out and I visit the boroughs and, really importantly, that I continue to develop that listening to people who are most in need of our services. One of the things that is really humbling and is a great honour in my role is to be able to go and visit people, talk to rape victims, which I have done over the years, and talk to the families of murder victims. It is humbling and it is difficult, but it is absolutely necessary so that I understand what they need from the mayoralty and so that they understand that this mayoralty is one that listens, this mayoralty is one that is on their side and this mayoralty is going to take what they need and do our utmost to deliver it.

Nicholas Rogers AM: Thank you. I look forward to introducing you to our residents in South West London.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): I have a very quick question. You have talked about your successes. What are you most unhappy about? If you could pick one or two failures, what is at the top of your list?

Sophie Linden: In terms of looking back over the last five years, the pandemic has clearly knocked the whole country for six. I am really disappointed by some of the aspects of the pandemic that are not headlines.

One of the things that I was really pleased about in the last administration – and it took a long time and I regret that it took so long – was that we set up Prison Pathfinders. Everyone knows that when somebody goes into prison, the likelihood of them reoffending and continuing on their path of violence is pretty high. That is one of the things that came out of the consultation that I had in prisons. It took a long time to set up two Prison Pathfinders. They were just getting going when the pandemic hit. We are not going to be able to see

the results of that. I regret it took so long because, if we had got that going quicker, we would have started to see the results of that. That is one of my regrets.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): Is there anything that you have done personally, which is what we are here for? Have you made a decision that you regret making? Do not involve the pandemic because that shifted everything. Have you made a decision in the last five years that you regret making?

Sophie Linden: I have not made a decision that I regret making. I would be remiss not to talk about the Estate Strategy and police stations. I do not regret the decisions that were taken, but I regret the fact that we were taken to judicial review about it, because it took up a lot of time. We learned lessons from that. I regret, in terms of the lessons we learned, that they were not embedded already. If we had done that in a different way, we would have got past, we would have made progress much more quickly.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): OK. I will leave it at that. Thank you.

Marina Ahmad AM: Chairman, could I just address the comment you made? It is absolutely essential that the abilities of the Deputy Mayor are examined in terms of the context of the really difficult circumstances of Government cuts. I do not take offence, but I would challenge your assertion there. We do need to know how the work has been done in terms of successes in the context of the appalling Government cuts that have taken place.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Comments like that deflect from the fact – excuse me, Sophie, for speaking about you as if you are not here – that we are here to focus on Sophie’s response to that. Many of us who have been in the London Assembly for some time have battled to have more money directed at the MPS. This is not the context of this conversation. We will have that conversation for the next year. Today is to focus on Sophie’s response to the situation in which she will find herself, funding aside. Sophie will have to respond to whatever level of funding she has and --

Marina Ahmad AM: Chairman, that is exactly what we have been putting forward.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): -- that is the context I want this meeting to be held in. It was not a barbed comment at you. If I had directed it at you, I would have named you. I am just trying to give everybody, including Sophie, some parameters to operate within to make sure we focus on what Sophie brings to the role regardless of the situation that Sophie finds.

Unmesh Desai AM: Sophie, we are now going to ask you some questions about your responsibilities and work as Deputy Mayor. The formal question is this. What have you done as Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to make Londoners feel safer and to make London a safer place?

Now, you have already given us some examples. You have talked about the £1 billion in investment, extra officers, the Gangs Matrix and the public health approach. There will be questions, no doubt, from colleagues about violence against women and girls in particular, and serious youth violence.

Can I focus on three areas? Give us concrete examples of what you have done to make London a safer place. In the whole area of terrorism and radicalisation, Lord Toby Harris’s report had about 127 recommendations. The last time we had a report back from you, you were halfway through implementing those recommendations. Give some examples of what you have done to make Londoners feel safer against the threat of terrorism. On the important issue of antisocial behaviour, have you been working with councils and so on? That is the

day-to-day experience and the reality of life facing Londoners. Then perhaps you might want to give some examples around the Action Plan and improving confidence in the MPS and the many diverse communities. Where are we with that progress?

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Sophie, before you start, there is an awful lot there and so can we try to be succinct?

Sophie Linden: I will try. As I said in my opening remarks, we must not forget that 2017 was such a terrible time for London in terms of the terrorist attacks. Because of what happened in 2017, the Mayor and I set up within MOPAC - but it is across City Hall - a team looking at countering violent extremism. We published a report and a review of how London is faring in countering violent extremism. A lot of recommendations were within that.

One of the things I am really proud that came out of that was funding for the Shared Endeavour Fund, which is up and running. We are funding about 30 organisations in London at the moment to tackle hate crime and to tackle violent extremism, working with organisations like the Anne Frank Trust around antisemitism and other organisations around online extremism and racism. I am really proud of that work. We are looking at the prevention of terrorism and preventing people becoming radicalised. That is one specific example around terrorism.

I chair the CONTEST Board, which brings together partners from around London to look at the four pillars of CONTEST: prevention, pursuing, protection and preparedness. We have worked very hard on that, bringing it together and making sure that we learn lessons from, for example, Manchester Arena. That is another way in which MOPAC and I - and I have been leading and chairing the CONTEST Board over the last few years - have been working around terrorism.

On antisocial behaviour, it is really clear in the Police and Crime Plan. Because of the consultation and because of the feedback we had, we were asked to make sure that antisocial behaviour was seen as a priority pan-London, and it is. It is one of the things that we have oversight of through MOPAC and the MPS. We have kept it as a priority. In the development of the Police and Crime Plan going forward, we will again look at what we need to be doing around antisocial behaviour.

On the third one around the Action Plan, only yesterday was the anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. We developed the Action Plan in relation to trust and confidence in the police, a really important piece of work around engaging with Londoners to try to improve the trust and confidence of the black community in particular around the MPS.

As one of the strands that have come off that - it is only a few months ago that we published it - we have already had the handcuffing review that the MPS has published and we have already started the pilot for, when a car is stopped through the Road Traffic Act, the ethnicity of the driver is to be recorded. Those are two specifics coming out of quite a large Action Plan in relation to improving trust and confidence that we have already delivered.

Tony Devenish AM: Good morning, Deputy Mayor. You are completely accountable to the Mayor, are you not, in terms of how you deliver the role? Can you tell us a little bit about your personal relationship with Mr [Sadiq] Khan, please?

Sophie Linden: I have a very good relationship with the Mayor. It is a very professional relationship, but also over the course of the years I would now count him as my friend, because he has been very supportive. I have talked about the difficulties of London. He supports me in my role. He supports me personally and professionally. One of the things that I find of real value is, because he is able to take an overview of the work that I do and I am embedded in the detail, if I go to him for advice, he is very good at giving that real important advice which is not just personal, it is professional and he has a real understanding of Londoners. You are absolutely right. It is an important relationship.

I am held to account by the [Mayor's] Chief of Staff [David Bellamy] in terms of my management. Those quarterly performance reports that I have just spoken about are not just for the MPS to be held to account. They are also for me to be held to account as well. I have quarterly performance meetings with the Chief of Staff, who is doing that on behalf of the Mayor, and I have regular meetings with the Mayor himself to make sure that I am on track and doing the things that he wishes, his priorities, and I am able to discuss any particular problems or issues with him.

Tony Devenish AM: We are well aware that you have regular meetings with Mr [David] Bellamy [Mayor's Chief of Staff] and also you have your meetings with the MPS. I am interested in the regularity of the Mayor having an interest in your agenda, or our agenda. You say you have regular meetings. How many times have you met the Mayor on a one-to-one basis in the last five years?

Sophie Linden: I would not be able to tell you that off the top of my head because I have had nearly always regular monthly one-to-one meetings. Also, you have to factor in that we have the regular bilaterals with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis or the Deputy Commissioner of the MPS. I also meet with him - during the course of the pandemic it was weekly, now we have moved to fortnightly - on a regular basis through those bilaterals. Clearly, we always have a meeting beforehand and then we have our regular one-to-ones. I am afraid I cannot tell you off the top of my head how many times in the last five years I have met him one-to-one, but of course we can let you have those figures. I just need to look at my diary.

Tony Devenish AM: I would love to have those figures. One of the things that the Mayor does every month when he reports to the Assembly is he puts all the meetings he has had with everybody he has met during the month. It would be quite interesting to see who you are meeting, particularly the Mayor, because there are an awful lot of rumours - maybe they are Westminster village rumours - that you do not meet the Mayor at all, that Mayor really only talks to Mr Bellamy and you talk to Mr Bellamy, but not to the Mayor.

Sophie Linden: I have not heard those rumours. You can hear it from me that I regularly meet the Mayor. I regularly talk to the Mayor. I regularly engage with the Mayor. I have no idea where those rumours are coming from because they are certainly not based in fact.

Tony Devenish AM: You mentioned two of the larger items of the last five years. One was the knife crime murder spike of 2017, and we have not spoken about the Sarah Everard event of this year.

Many people have said to me that when we had the previous Deputy Mayors [for Policing and Crime], Kit Malthouse and Stephen Greenhalgh, they were all over the community and the media when something of that magnitude happened. I remember, as I am sure everybody else in this room does, the Saturday in March [2021] when the vigil happened and the terrible events at that vigil. You were invisible. The Mayor was in the media. Many other leading politicians were in the media. I know that both Kit Malthouse and Stephen Greenhalgh, when similar things happened, they would be very visible in the community and in the media.

Do you regret that you perhaps are very low profile? Would you accept that you are fairly low profile in terms of large events like that?

Sophie Linden: No, I do not. I am not going to comment on how Stephen Greenhalgh and Kit Malthouse may have had to step in because of who was in the post of Mayor. I do not feel the need, when the Mayor is taking the lead and the Mayor is the elected representative of Londoners, to also be in the media about that. He is the elected representative of London. I am his deputy. In those cases, I am there supporting him, I am there talking to the community - it is not that I am not around. If Kit Malthouse did that, maybe it was because the previous Mayor was not stepping into that position. Sadiq [Khan] is leading as the Mayor of London and I am there to support him and that is what I do.

Tony Devenish AM: Could you give me an example from either of those two incidents - the knife crime murder spike that was worse than New York in 2017, or indeed the terrible events with Sarah Everard? I make the point that the Chairman made so well earlier. We are not fully, with respect, interested in the overall political picture. We know that. We know what the Commissioner does. We know what the VRU does. I am very interested in what you have done. Where have you made a difference in one of those two major events, please?

Sophie Linden: If we take 2017, it is absolutely in my heart what happened in not just 2017 but 2018 as well when we had an increase in murders. I was very visible and out there engaging and talking to communities. I can give you the dates when I have been out talking to the communities and the meetings in the aftermath of terrible murders. I have been to Lambeth. I have been to Haringey. I have been to Hackney. I have been all over London talking to those communities that have been affected by the murders.

Actually, we take the decision. Those are not meetings where we want the media. Those are meetings where I want to have proper conversations with the community. They are not media events. Those are times when the community needs to come together. Those are times when they need to be heard. People like me are not there to be part of a media circus. People like me are there to listen. People like me are there to learn. That is why they are not large media events.

In relation to what happened with Sarah Everard, I had meetings after the event with the community organisers. I was discussing it with the MPS. I was doing my role in order to ensure that there was oversight of the MPS and an understanding of what was happening. The Mayor was taking the lead publicly on that and that is absolutely right and proper as the elected representative.

Tony Devenish AM: I appreciate what you have said, but can you give me a bit more of a granular example, perhaps on the latter one, in terms of what you did --

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Sorry, Assembly Member Devenish. I would like to move on because we are under extreme time pressure here and I know many members have some very detailed questions they might need answered.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I have a few questions for you, Sophie. First of all, in your role as leading MOPAC, MOPAC's performance and reputation reflects then on you in your role as Deputy Mayor. Members of this Assembly will often write to you about complex issues, perhaps following up on an oral question or a discussion we have had at a committee. Certainly, I have often found that MOPAC takes a very long time to respond. It can be at least a month. Many times, it can be several months.

How are you in the next three years going to improve response times to correspondence sent to your office?

Sophie Linden: Caroline, I recognise that depiction of MOPAC over the last few years. I absolutely recognise that we have not been as good as we should be in responding to correspondence.

I hope you will have seen a difference and a change in relation to correspondence over the last few months. That is certainly a priority for me. It is a priority for Diana Luchford, Chief Executive of MOPAC, to ensure that relationship with you as the Police and Crime Committee -- you can see the importance that we place on it because we are answering your letters as quickly as we can. We are answering your correspondence as quickly as we can. We do not delay in the way that we have in the past. It was the past and I do apologise for that, but we are really keen to ensure that that does not happen again. Our correspondence at the moment is at pretty high rates of returning and returning on time.

I would just put one small caveat in. One of the things that a lot of the correspondence, as with Mayor's Questions (MQs), entails is data and asking the MPS for information. I am genuinely not trying to pass the buck, but sometimes that information in the MPS is not easy to come across; sometimes it is difficult to find and difficult to collate. That is the only caveat. I cannot remember the figure for our correspondence but 80% of our MQs are dependent on information from the MPS. We have put a lot of effort into working with the MPS to speed those processes up as well. I do recognise what you say and I understand what you are saying, but we have shown in the last few months what a difference we can make when we really prioritise it and we really focus on it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That is good to hear, but if I am writing to you as Deputy Mayor, it would not be about a matter that needed data from the MPS because I could write to the Commissioner and she normally replies within two weeks. It is normally a wider policy area that we would like your input on. I welcome that. That sounds really positive.

In terms of that and in terms of how you might improve or change your relationship with the Assembly and with Police and Crime Committee Members in particular, in some ways just stepping back and observing the lack of any contact outside of the Police and Crime Committee, are you looking at how you might engage more particularly with lead Members of this Committee so that we can have that ongoing dialogue as certainly I have with other Deputy Mayors?

Sophie Linden: I do not completely recognise a lack of contact. I have certainly set off in the beginning of the administration to have more one-to-ones and they did fall by the wayside. That is one of the things, coming back again, I reflect on. What will I do differently and what will I make sure I keep up? That will be one of them.

We have had some good off-the-record briefing meetings with you as Committee Members. For example, we had two in relation to the development of the Action Plan, which were really important. I do not completely recognise a total lack of engagement, but we certainly can improve on that.

One of the priorities in the next few months is getting a Police and Crime Plan out to consultation. One of the things that is already in the grid and already in the timetabling is how we engage. There will formal moments for your scrutiny of the Police and Crime Plan, but how do we engage with you as Assembly Members to ensure that your expertise and your understanding of London and, particularly for constituency

Assembly Members, your real understanding of the areas you are representing are fed into the Police and Crime Plan?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I welcome that and look forward to seeing a shift there in how we can improve that.

I have a couple of other areas that I want to pick up to understand your focus for the next three years. One of them is around child safeguarding and how the MPS deals with the whole issue from child abuse to child sexual exploitation. There are links to county lines and so on as well. The MPS has been seriously criticised. The Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) reports have not been a happy read.

I want to understand what additional focus you are going to be putting into this area over the next three years, particularly looking at things like looked-after children who go missing. There are 10,000 looked-after children in London and 21% - one in five - have a missing incident. That is huge. What are you doing to work with boroughs on that, using data, flagging things on the MPS systems, which are often out of date, and really understanding how you are going to work with the VRU and the boroughs to really transform and make sure children are safe in our city and the MPS is doing everything it can, and that we get a good outcome from future HMIC inspections?

Sophie Linden: As you know and as the Committee knows, you have been very persistent, quite rightly, and I am regularly asked questions about progress on the HMIC report.

Progress has not been as quick as I or the MPS would have wanted, and certainly not as quick as HMIC would have wanted, but there has been progress. After the HMIC report was published, I set up the Oversight Board, which was not just for the MPS but the College of Policing, HMIC and also representatives of the National Police Chiefs' Council as well because I was really keen to ensure that we garnered the best practice and advice from the best in the country. That Board has been successful in keeping an oversight and a grip on progress for the HMIC report.

It has not been fast enough and there are areas that do need to improve, but there have been some improvements. The reports have been difficult reading, but there has been some good progress in some areas around leadership. I know HMIC is positive and interested in the progress that has been made and the investment the MPS put in around Operation Aegis, which has been rolled out across London and is around a real grip for frontline officers to have an understanding of the vulnerability of young people, their real-time vulnerability. I went down to visit it in Croydon. It is really interesting about the grip and the understanding that frontline officers and their managers have so that they can task out appropriately.

Going forward, there is a question for me over how we take the Oversight Board forward and how we make sure that it is the right Oversight Board instead of just trundling on as we have. Assistant Commissioner Nick Ephgrave has set up the Public Protection Board and has a new Public Protection Strategy. That Strategy has a fantastic grip not just on child protection, but across the piece on everything to do with public protection and vulnerability of adults and children and young people.

What I have to do is wait. The HMIC came into the MPS in February [2021]. We are waiting for the results of that HMIC report. When I have had those results, I will make a decision as to whether we change the Oversight Board in any way or whether we need to carry on exactly as we are. It will depend on what they are saying. I do not know what they are going to say yet. We have not had the feedback yet. Dependent on that report, I will make some decisions as to how best to make sure that we make progress.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: It sounds to me like you may flex and increase your oversight and have, not quite interventions, but real forensic focus on this issue because it has not been good enough to date.

Sophie Linden: I will make decisions about that when the report is published because there has been progress. As I keep saying, it is not good enough and it has not been fast enough.

One of the frustrations in this area - and I genuinely mean this - is that I have had conversations with HMIC when they have said, "It is not fast enough. It is not good enough", and I have said, "What is fast enough? What is good enough? Where in the country is doing this better?" We have brought people in for good practice. There are very few places in the country, not whole forces, that are doing much better than we are on this. It is a real difficult, challenging area for all police forces across the country.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Can I just cut in at this point and say we have reached a halfway point? If in any way Members could aid me by speeding up, your brevity would be really appreciated.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That is fine. My final question you touched on earlier when saying you regretted some of the decisions around the police estate. You told me in December last year [2020] that we would have the list of disposals by February 2021. In March [2021] you told me it would be ready at the end of that month. Now you have said in recent correspondence that it is going to be later this year. When can we expect to see that Police Estate Strategy? It is a really important piece of work.

Sophie Linden: To clarify, my regret was around the processes for decision making, which left us vulnerable. I do not regret the decisions. They were the right decisions and they were difficult decisions, but they were right.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Every time I ask you a question it seems to slip off further. I was just citing, at speed for the Chairman, examples. It is now later this year. When are we going to see that important piece of work?

Sophie Linden: I am expecting the final signed-off Estate Strategy, which will have been through the Commissioner, really shortly. When that has arrived and MOPAC has the final version, we will have that oversight and will take it through our clearance procedures. Clearly, we have had lots of discussions along the way and so I do not expect, once it has been signed off by the Commissioner, for it to take too long. These are complicated matters and so, sorry, Caroline, it is going to be "shortly" again.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Can I just get us to focus again on Sophie's input to the role?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: It was on Sophie's input to the Strategy, but thank you.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): We can all come back to all the burning questions you have through our work programme in the year.

Sem Moema AM: I just had a short question for you about the Police and Crime Plan, which says that there are two ambitions for the MPS and partners, including a safer city for everyone and extra protections.

How do you feel you have met these ambitions? How do you think you might continue to meet them going forward?

Sophie Linden: I am really proud of the Police and Crime Plan. It has lasted the course of five years. We have had to flex. There have been things that have cropped up. As always with crime, things develop, but we have had the flexibility from MOPAC to continue to tackle those things that did crop up.

I am proud of the Police and Crime Plan because, in terms of its overarching themes of tackling violence against women and girls and keeping children and young people safe, we have really delivered on that. I have already talked about the investment in tackling violence against women and girls and in keeping children and young people safe. The setting up of the VRU is a key part of that and a progression from the Police and Crime Plan in relation to that.

Going forward, as I have said already, we are going to go out for formal consultation of the Police and Crime Plan. We hope to do that relatively quickly. I am really clear that the absolute priorities for the Police and Crime Plan will be around tackling violence in all its forms. It will be around increasing trust and confidence in the MPS. It will also be around ensuring that we have the oversight from MOPAC and me of the MPS. That not only ensures that Londoners feel that the MPS is accountable and transparent to them, but also enables progress and enables improvement. That is where we will be going with the Police and Crime Plan.

In relation to the safety of Londoners, if we take violence, before the pandemic started - and we are not at all complacent and we have recently seen some absolutely dreadful murders - it is important to understand that we were making progress. We had seen a 25% reduction in serious youth violence if we take the year before the pandemic started. This is not a COVID effect. Obviously, if we put COVID in, it looks far more impressive. To be open and transparent, it was pre-COVID, February to February of the previous year, when we saw a 25% reduction in violence. I really want to make sure that we not only continue that, but that it becomes a sustained and embedded reduction. That is how we will make the streets of London safer.

Sem Moema AM: Thank you. You have already mentioned that yesterday was the anniversary of George Floyd's death in the United States. That had repercussions here in London and across the rest of the country.

You put in place the Action Plan to try to tackle some of those issues around trust. In the next term, how do you think that the MPS and MOPAC will continue to establish better trust, particularly between the black community and the police? There has been mention of the murder of Sarah Everard. Again, with women and the police, how will you be tackling that in practical terms over the next three years? What can we expect to see?

Sophie Linden: The Action Plan on trust and confidence in relation to the black community really does set out how we want to deliver that. There is the community training. The Mayor has put over £1 million into community training. That is really important because people have said to us so often - and I am sure you have heard it many times as well - that the new police officers coming in do not understand the communities that they are serving. It is really important that there is that understanding. That community training of police officers not only builds up that relationship, but ensures that when the police officers go out onto the streets of London and into their communities, that engagement is based on an understanding so that relationship is already built upon a foundation which means it will be successful. For me, that is the really important part of making sure we deliver on that.

It has already started. We have the pilot in the south of London with Mentivity. It was slightly delayed because of the pandemic and all the COVID security issues and safety issues. It is up and running now. In March [2021] it got up and running for that community training.

A major part as well is around ensuring there is accountability, scrutiny and transparency. One of the things underway in the Action Plan is setting in motion an overhaul of our community engagement structures, including the Community Monitoring Groups, to ensure that they are more robust and they are more diverse. People understand and know that they are happening and there was feedback to the community around that. That is underway. The review is underway or will be underway.

Delivery of the Action Plan will certainly help in increasing trust and confidence and we will monitor it. We are really clear. I am really clear that I will be monitoring that via the Public Attitudes Survey, which shows us that trust and confidence, and also by looking at the levels of disproportionality. What are we seeing in the use of police powers, not only the use of them but the effectiveness of them? I want to see disproportionality falling and positive outcomes increasing because those powers are incredibly important for tackling violence.

Marina Ahmad AM: Have you used your office to support those seeking help to escape domestic abuse, particularly during lockdown, and how do you anticipate this continuing as lockdown further eases?

Sophie Linden: At the beginning of the pandemic, it was really clear from evidence that was coming out from abroad and Europe that one of the things that happened during lockdown was that domestic abuse increased. I was really clear that we should learn the lessons and learn them quickly, so I made it very clear from the beginning that I was prepared to invest and put money behind this to make sure that we could provide additional refuge spaces. I put in and the Mayor put in £1.5 million during the course of the pandemic to ensure that women, if they needed to, could leave their homes and there would be spaces for them. That emergency accommodation has helped hundreds of women and their children and I am really heartened by that, but I am also really saddened that that has been the case and we have had to put that in.

That was emergency accommodation and it was dependent on really good rates because of the pandemic in hostels, hotels and properties. Going forward, it is not going to be possible to keep that. One of the things in the new Domestic Abuse Bill, which we have lobbied for and worked very hard for with [Minister for Safeguarding] Victoria Atkins [MP] and the Ministry for Housing, [Communities] and Local Government, is that there is a new duty within the Domestic Abuse Bill for City Hall and us to ensure there is sufficiency of supply for refuge spaces and ensure there is commissioning of refuge spaces. MOPAC is working very hard on ensuring that we are ready for that new duty and are working with boroughs. We are doing that now.

Léonie Cooper AM: There are a number of priority areas and we are starting to touch on quite a few of them: serious youth violence, addressed by the VRU and work in that area; support for victims, appointing a Victims Commissioner; tackling violence against women and girls; promoting the idea of the domestic abuse register, which is something we have strongly supported through this Committee and the Assembly; and trying to address disproportionality both in how the MPS impacts on Londoners and also in recruitment, where we are agreeing that more needs to be done.

If you had to give yourself marks out of ten for progress so far across a number of these areas and others, how many marks would you give yourself out of ten? What has worked well so far and what have been the main sticking points? How are you going to deliver a higher level of marks out of ten in the next three years?

Sophie Linden: It is difficult to give marks out of ten, I slightly hesitate to do that. In terms of really making a difference to Londoners, I am really proud that the Mayor and I have invested so heavily in the MPS. He has made decisions to switch business rates into the MPS, the first time ever that has happened. He also made difficult decisions to increase the precept, which was not happening in the previous mayoralty. I am really proud of that. That means that there are more police officers out there on the streets in the Violent Crime Task Force and in the Violence Suppression Units.

Really importantly for me as well, one of the things that I am really pleased with, is the delivery of Sadiq's [Khan] 2016 manifesto commitment to restoring neighbourhood policing with two Dedicated Ward Officers and a Police Community Support Officer per ward. That was a commitment and it has been delivered. I am really pleased with that and it does make a difference to Londoners. It makes a difference to communities. There is a commitment in this manifesto to increase the visibility and increase the numbers in neighbourhood policing and town centres. One of the things that is a real priority for me going forward, to ensure that that happens. It will not be across London. It will be, as we said in the manifesto, in town centres and in those areas of London that need it the most. It is building on that bedrock of neighbourhood policing and then increasing into those areas that need additional neighbourhood police officers.

I am really also very proud of the work that we have done in MOPAC on violence against women and girls and tackling the terrible harm that is being created by violence against women and girls and the perpetrators. If I may take a different example, we invested money into training around female genital mutilation (FGM) and, for a relatively small amount of money, 1,000 professionals were trained in how to spot and support and ensure that women and girls are protected from FGM. A small amount of money made a huge difference to women and girls who are vulnerable to FGM in London.

Léonie Cooper AM: That is reflecting on some things that you think went well. I was also talking about the future. If we contextualise the two areas that you have just picked on, the returning Assembly Members here were all here when the Basic Command Unit (BCU) restructure took place, which was entirely aimed at enabling staff on the front line to be retained. There were a number of changes after the pilots, it would be fair to say, and some problems and issues were identified, but the rollout continued. I speak as one of the Assembly Members for the four-borough BCUs. There was some discussion about whether it could work across four boroughs.

How would you rate the success of that behind the retention of staff on the front line? Are there any further tweaks that you think need to be done to the BCU structure?

Sophie Linden: Yes, we have not talked about that yet in terms of major pieces of work in the last administration.

Léonie Cooper AM: I thought I would throw it in. It seemed a small thing but worth mentioning.

Sophie Linden: It was a really large piece of work. In terms of oversight, those two Pathfinders were there because of the oversight that I did. Looking back, I talked with Mark Simmons [former Assistant Commissioner, MPS] and he would say this. He would acknowledge the role that MOPAC and I had in ensuring that there were two Pathfinders, they were properly evaluated, lessons were learned and then they were implemented. That was a really important piece of oversight challenge and also joint working in co-operation with the MPS for two reasons. One was around improving the service to Londoners, particularly improving the safeguarding service to Londoners.

Also, one of the things we have not really talked about a lot is remembering over the last five years that the MPS was shrinking. The MPS had to take £850 million out of its budget. For two years it was below 30,000 police officer numbers and that was the BCU restructure, but the restructure also had within it the ability to flex. Now that we are growing, in answer to your question, we are not looking at a review of the restructure or a review of the BCUs, but there is the ability for it to flex to put more officers into public protection or safeguarding, or to put more officers into neighbourhoods, or more officers into response, depending on the operational decisions of the Commissioner. That structure has proved very resilient in relation to being able to flex.

Going forward, what I will be looking at is to ensure, for example, with everything we know about what is not a good area of performance for the MPS, detections of rape and sexual violence, the BCU structure enables that to improve. How do we ensure that there is this sufficient capacity, skills and expertise at BCU level to ensure that that happens? That is one of the things that I am really focused on.

We have actually put a proposal into the Home Office to transform rape investigation and to make sure that rape investigation starts where you would want any investigation of crime to start, by investigating the offender and not the victim. What I will be looking at is how we ensure that the structure of the BCUs enables this to happen and how we ensure that the improvement in investigation is spread right across the MPS, not just in sexual violence and rape.

Léonie Cooper AM: Thank you. That gives me an idea of one of the areas going forward where I think we would all agree there is an urgent need for improvement, but you would not be looking to change the current structure. You feel that having undertaken that as part of your previous experience in the prior five years, it is now able to start to scale up tackling this issue. At the moment, frankly, perpetrators can pretty much do what they want with almost complete impunity. I am very glad to hear that there are improvements that you are looking for in that area.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): Sophie, in 2016, you said that you would work with the police to rebuild the trust of Londoners. Confidence in the police at that point was at 69%. It is now at a miserable 56% and so, clearly, something has gone very wrong there. What do you think has gone wrong?

Sophie Linden: London has experienced massive challenges, as has the MPS, and you cannot divorce or forget what I have just talked about in relation to the capacity of the MPS. If you have police officer numbers below 30,000 and you have crime rising nationally and violence rising nationally, which means it did in London as well, it is going to affect their view of the MPS. That is what has happened. Not only are we growing the MPS because of the Mayor's money, but also because of Government investment, as I have talked about already, I will be ensuring that we deliver the Action Plan that we have put in place and that Action Plan does provide a step change and increase and improve the confidence of Londoners.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): You accept it is a very poor figure now?

Sophie Linden: It is a worrying figure, of course it is, and I accepted it was a worrying figure before the election. That is why we put the Action Plan in place. I absolutely accept there needs to be more improvement and progress and that is what I am committed to delivering with the MPS.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): If you could choose one thing for the reason for the confidence in the police and policing, what one thing do you think is affecting this more than anything?

Sophie Linden: Susan, I am really sorry, you cannot choose one thing. One of the things that we do - one of the great things in MOPAC that I have talked about previously as well - is the Evidence and Insight Team has incredibly good analysis. Not only do they undertake the Public Attitudes Survey so that you have those figures and I have those figures to ensure that I oversee and hold the MPS accountable to them. That is not happening in other forces. Other forces across the country do not have that, so we do not have comparable figures for across the country. But one of the things the Evidence and Insight Team does is look at the reasons. They are complex. There are a number of reasons behind that. If you start to dig below the figures you can see that one of the big drivers, some of the drivers around confidence and trust are around first contact, around information, engagement, it is also across the criminal justice system. It is also about what happens to their cases. You cannot choose just one thing, so it is looking across the piece to make sure that you are driving every element that makes a difference to the trust and confidence of Londoners.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): The one thing that we must concentrate on though is, if things go down, if the confidence goes down, it is somebody else's fault. If confidence starts to go up, you will take the credit for it. Sometimes we have to look and say exactly where we are going wrong and why things are wrong.

I will move on to the next question. What do you anticipate will be the top three challenges for your role as Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime over the coming term?

Sophie Linden: The absolute number one challenge is tackling violence and continuing the reduction in violence. If that is the question you are asking me, that is not only the number one challenge, it is the number one priority as well. Then again the other major challenge is, as you rightly pick up on and you are absolutely right to pick up on the figures around trust and confidence, is that delivery of the Action Plan, delivery of improving trust and confidence not only amongst young black Londoners, but also with women as well. One of the things in the Action Plan that I was really keen to ensure, and it is in the Action Plan, is this is not just about young black Londoners experiencing stop and search; this is also about black women's experience when they go to the police or if they feel they are able to go to the police to report sexual violence or domestic violence. I am really clear that is the second of the major challenges.

The third challenge that I am looking at now is the budget. It is a massive challenge to ensure that the budget is set, we still have savings to come out of the budget, you know that from the budget that we set out in December, the proposal. We still have millions of pounds. This year we have set a balanced budget, but going forward in 2022/23 we have millions of pounds to take out of the budget still. That is going to be a challenge.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Sorry, Assembly Member Hall, can I just interject? This is a personal question. You say that the budget is going to be a challenge and of course it is, we all know that. Previously the Mayor removed £38 million from the police staffing budget. What will you personally be doing? Which parts of the police budget will you protect in your conversations with the Mayor? There will need to be negotiation there. He may want to go one way, you may think something else is a priority. How can you reassure us that you will have the personal skill to represent what you think is Londoners' priority? Of course, you have talked a lot about capacity, but that £38 million was directly focused on the capacity of the police to deliver because it was from the staffing budget. If that becomes an issue now with, hopefully in your case, new negotiations around the budget, what skills have you developed over the last five years to make us know that you will make the right representation for Londoners?

Sophie Linden: Shaun, you know that £38 million was not a cut from the budget; it was an underspend in the budget. It was not a cut. You know that. We have had this to-ing and fro-ing a lot. It is a bit disappointing that --

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): That is not the point. This is about your personal skill in getting what you think is important for Londoners around the budget.

Sophie Linden: Yes, and you started off the question with “Cut 38”. You know it was not a cut. It was a treatment of an underspend. One of the things that I did during the course of the last five years is that, where there were underspends in staffing, we put it into reserves to be able to ensure, and we are using those reserves now, to ensure that we hold up police officer numbers as much as possible. That is one of the things that I have done over the last five years. In terms of protecting, it is not a negotiation between the Mayor and me. We are absolutely aligned on this. We want to protect frontline officers. We want to protect officer numbers. So does the Commissioner. The question is how we do that and how we get the savings out to ensure that happens. The Chief Finance Officer and I will be having – and are already having – conversations and discussions around that. It is a bit like Groundhog Day with the setting of the budget. As soon as you put it to bed, you start again. We are already thinking about that.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): If I can go back to this please, we really want to know how you are going to ensure that crime levels do not return to the pre-pandemic levels. If I can just quote you, up until the pandemic started, from when you took over, robbery was up 85.7%, rape was up 40.5%, violence against the person was up 19.5%, knife crime was up 60% and homicide was up 34.2%. That is not a very good record, is it?

Sophie Linden: There are a few things in that, are there not? One is, as you know, and anybody that has any interest in crime and criminality knows, there are complex reasons behind crime. I am not trying to duck responsibility. I will take responsibility for what I can deliver and I have responsibility for. But we all know that those trends that you have picked out just for London were trends that have been rising across the country. We all know that violence is rising nationally, as was crime rising nationally. The complex reasons for that are around depravation, poverty, socioeconomic factors. We know that. What I can take responsibility for is how well the MPS are delivering, how well they are reacting to that. I can also take responsibility for how well we use the budgets that we have to commission and to ensure that, where we can, we are diverting people away from criminality and crime. I would say, Susan, that you have picked some figures there and I could bandy some statistics back as well.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): It is irrelevant, though. These figures, Sophie, are really bad. Yes, I am sure you could find some good ones. That is hardly the point. We are talking about robbery, rape, violence, knife crimes. They are the important things. They are what Londoners care about.

Sem Moema AM: If I could intervene, I am struggling to understand where this is going in relation to the confirmation and --

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): Because --

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): One second, please, one second, please, both Members. I have allowed it because Sophie engaged in the conversation. I am prepared to stop --

Sophie Linden: I would welcome that because I can come back on any relevant points.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): I am prepared to stop because I want to move on for time, not because I believe the Member is going in the wrong direction. Sophie engaged in the conversation and of course Sophie

is allowed to engage in any conversation she likes. But I will stop because I have a real time pressure here. Do you feel like you have covered off question 7?

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): I will replace 7 with another one, but it is very quick. Cybercrime, as you will be aware, is an issue that is increasingly important, with several high-profile cases in the news recently. It has come to my attention that MOPAC's cybersecurity training completion rate is abysmal. Will you undertake to look at that since it is cybercrime and since you are the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime? Will you care to look at that and start putting a target, which they have to reach?

Sophie Linden: I will have a look at that and get back to you, absolutely.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you.

Caroline Russell AM: Can I first of all say how pleased I am to join this Committee and how much I am looking forward to working with everyone and with our Deputy Mayor, once confirmed. My first question has already been asked by Assembly Member Rogers earlier, which was, if the Committee confirms you as Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, what will you do differently this term? You said you would get out and listen more to Londoners.

I will move straight to my supplementary question on that. We have seen a move towards more of a public health approach to policing and also listening more to young people. I have two questions here. What have you learned from that approach and how will you carry on with that work?

Sophie Linden: The public health approach, that question is really interesting because one of the discussions we have been having, and one of the things we have been thinking about as well, is how will I approach the Police and Crime Plan and what are the priorities. I am really clear what the priorities are. But the framework that I now have, when I am thinking about anything to do with criminality and crime or any particular offence, whether it is violence against women and girls or robbery or whatever, is framed in that public health approach. It is what can you do to prevent it? What are the early interventions that you can do to prevent it? What can you do and what can I do to ensure that the MPS are as effective as possible, so policing and enforcement, there is always going to be a role for enforcement, and rightly so.

What can we do to detect it and what can the police do to ensure that they are fulfilling their role as best they can? Then the two other elements are what do you do with those people who are perpetrating whatever crime it is? How do you change behaviour? What do you do around enforcement? What is the right enforcement? If it is a community sentence, how do you make sure there is the right support to change behaviour? If it is custodial, because the community needs to be safe - and that is right and proper that some people do need to go to prison - what do you do for people in prison and what is the role of MOPAC in relation to that?

Then, really importantly, how do you make sure that victims are at the centre of everything? All those elements. That is the way that I now approach - I have for a long time - it is really distilled and it is a public health approach. That is absolutely how, going forward, we will be approaching everything we do in relation to the work we do at MOPAC, is looking at all those elements and what can we do? What is the role of MOPAC? MOPAC does not have responsibilities in all those areas. It has responsibility in some of those areas, but we certainly have a convening responsibility and power across the criminal justice system. That is one of the things that we will be doing and we will continue to build on in the way that we have over the last few years.

Caroline Russell AM: My next question is that the role of Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime involves convening partners and organisations that may not fall within MOPAC's control or remit. How successful have you been in influencing these other partners to work with you to help to make London safer?

Sophie Linden: It is one of the conundrums of the role that you have limited powers, limited levers; you have statutory obligations, but they are limited. But you cannot underestimate the power of the Mayoralty in convening. That is why Mayoralty is really important and I have long been a believer in Mayors and Mayoralities. If I give you an example of how that has worked in the past and how we have used the power of the Mayoralty to convene.

In tackling violence, the Probation Service, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the courts could all work with us or not work with us. I have convened them, and I convened them on a regular basis during the course of 2017 and 2018 to look at what we could do across the criminal justice system to tackle violence. MOPAC developed, with Probation, a new community order for people who were offenders against knife crime. So, from having very limited powers, the convening power meant we delivered something, and people have been on these orders and we are evaluating that at the moment.

The other example I would give around convening is in relation to the pandemic, we all know what crisis the courts are in at the moment. I have convened the victim services, the courts, and CPS, to absolutely focus on what can we do about these backlogs and what can we do about victim support? We met regularly for few weeks, it has now gone to monthly, it is not so regular because it is not needed. We had specific things that we needed to do to make sure that victims who were waiting were getting the support that they needed. That is about convening.

I intend to use that ability to convene because we have built the relationships. I have regular meetings with all bits of the criminal justice system, leaders of the criminal justice system in London. I intend to use that on a regular basis because, when it is used and it is used efficiently and effectively, it can make a real difference.

Caroline Russell AM: Just going back to the issue of influence, do you think you have had enough influence over the MPS? I am thinking about areas where perhaps you and the Mayor have differed from the Commissioner in terms of the rollout of spit-hoods, for example, or the operational use of live facial recognition technology.

Have you been able to lead on, not just introducing new tactics, but a whole approach to policing? Beyond that, how do you see that relationship developing, especially with regard to the Mayor's Action Plan and the new Police and Crime Plan?

Sophie Linden: There is always going to be a line. Where that line is, is always a matter for debate and discussion, and relationship-building around operational tenets, and my role in oversight and holding the MPS to account. In terms of influence and holding the MPS to account, MOPAC and I have been influential. We have made progress working with the MPS because we have been able to show the difference and the added value that we bring, we have made a difference.

If you take your example of live facial recognition, that is an operational matter as to when it is deployed. But one of the things that I did is that we very early on said this has to go through the right governance, it has to go through the right processes, and it has to go through the right checks and balances. It went to the Ethics Panel. They produced a framework for decision making. The decisions, the ten deployments that the MPS

have made, have been pretty robust, very transparent and accountable, all on the website, all there. That is because of the joint collaboration and working that I and MOPAC have done with the MPS.

Nicholas Rogers AM: This is perhaps touching on some of the previous questions, but it may go a bit broader. As Deputy Mayor, you have a duty to consult with local people in setting your objectives. Could you outline how you have approached this duty? You did touch on this as potentially an area for improvement in my previous question. I am looking for specific examples of where your consultation has maybe resulted in you changing your approach to something.

Sophie Linden: There are a couple of things. In terms of regular consultation and engagement with Londoners, there are a few ways of doing that that we do in MOPAC. The public attitude survey is one of them. It gives us a very good understanding of what Londoners' priorities are, what they are thinking, and we do put questions into that. There are also the community engagement mechanisms that we have had within MOPAC, the Safer Neighbourhood Boards. They are under review now and that is what I was talking about earlier. It is a priority for me as part of the Action Plan to make sure we deliver on that review and that what comes out of it is a more robust, more diverse, more representative structure that enables people to come and voice their concerns, voice their opinions, but also engage with the MPS. That is a review that is underway at the moment.

If you take the Police and Crime Panel, I also said about the Knife Crime Strategy, one of the things I am proud of, looking back, is that when I arrived in MOPAC we did not have the networks, we did not have the community contacts, we did not have the ability to really quickly go out and talk to communities. We now have that. We have that because we have regularly gone out on issues, whether that be the development of the Police and Crime Plan, the development and launch of the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, or the Knife Crime Strategy, we will regularly go out. We do that through community organisations, but we also do that through ensuring that we have the right governance processes and structures. The Victims Commissioner is part of that process, and we ensure that we have the voice of victims constantly being fed into our policy development and the work that we do, as well as the delivery and the commissioning that we do. So the boards and the governance structures that we have within MOPAC are an important part of that as well.

Nicholas Rogers AM: I was looking for specific local examples. To pluck a constituency completely at random, when have you gone to the residents of Southwest London or any other constituency and engaged with them specifically on specific issues? You talk about community organisations, which specific organisations, for example, have you spoken to?

Sophie Linden: I cannot give you a long list off the top of my head, but I have been to - as I said previously - every borough of London and I have held open public meetings. It is not just through voluntary sector organisations or community organisations. I have held those open meetings so that people can come and talk and engage directly with me. In terms of networks, I have been down to Richmond, I have met the Safer Neighbourhood Board in Richmond. I have met - I am afraid I cannot remember off the top of my head the name of the organisation - a really fantastic organisation that is working with young people. I regularly go out. One of the things that I was trying to say when I answered your question is that I intend to redouble my efforts to make sure that I spend much more time outside of City Hall. It is so important that people understand that the mayoralty and MOPAC is there for them. But we gain so much by going out and talking to people.

Marina Ahmad AM: Sophie, how have you worked with Government to ensure that you deliver on the Mayor's policing commitments? I know you have touched on this previously, but perhaps you could expand on that and look at where we can go moving forward?

Sophie Linden: In terms of engaging with the Government, if I take an example, one of the things that I am really pleased with is the bill in front of Parliament at the moment. There are two things, one is on the statutory duty on tackling serious violence. That is something the Mayor has called for, something that we have had discussions with Government about, so MOPAC officials have also had discussions with their counterparts as officers in the Home Office. That is an example of engagement that has made a difference.

The second example, again in relation to serious violence, is I remember clearly quite quickly into working as Deputy Mayor of Policing and Crime, realising that if a woman is killed in her home, there will be, quite rightly, a domestic violence homicide review. If a child is killed by their parents, there will be, quite rightly, a serious case review. But if a young person is killed on the streets, there is not a statutory requirement for there to be a domestic homicide review. There is now going to be a requirement for there to be a domestic homicide review because we have lobbied, we have worked setting up the VRU, they have looked at statutory reviews and shown that there is a gap in this, which means that we have made the case. We have collaborated with the Government and we are now going to be piloting homicide reviews in London. Those are two examples of collaborative working and working with the Government on the priorities of the Mayor.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): You have talked a lot about things you have done, and rightly so, and what you want to do next. But what has been missing from this conversation for me is key performance indicators (KPIs). What are you measuring yourself by? For instance, you talked about the work that is being done around county lines. Everybody knows I am a youth worker, I have spoken to some of these workers involved in that. They have said that they hoped that there would be many more children involved. The reason I put that to you is, do you feel that what you feel in your experience will help you develop better, more focused, KPIs so that you can judge your own performance, you can redirect your finances as you see fit, because you have a better way of measuring if it has been impactful? This is not about saving money, but it is about maximising our return. We have had a lot of talk about the outputs but not as much about the measuring of those outcomes. What in your experience will you bring to bear to improve that situation for us all?

Sophie Linden: That is a fair question. Every contract we have has KPIs. All the commissioning, the grants, everything, we have performance indicators within it. Those are part of the day-to-day contract management of MOPAC that we look at. Is the contract delivering? Is it doing what we wanted it to do? We have that. What I do agree with you, and we need to become better at communicating, is what the outcomes are of those contracts. I can reel off how much we are spending, how many people, but we do need to get better at communicating the impact. We do have, through the Evidence and Insight Team in MOPAC, a really good programme of evaluation. We have evaluated, for example, the London Gang Exit. That is still in train, but early findings are that it is successful, it is improving, it is getting young people out of their gang lifestyle. So we have KPIs. We also have in-depth evaluation, for example like the London Gang Exit, evaluation on the Child Health that we set up. That evaluation is absolutely part of what we do.

How do I measure myself on my performance and MOPAC's performance and the MPS's performance? Go back to the performance reports and looking at the overarching how are we doing? What is the impact on crime? What is the impact on safety? What is the impact on victims? Really clear, we can see where it is going and that is monitored. Also, Londoners can monitor it because we publish those performance measurements and we also have the dashboards. A really important part of being open and transparent and enabling Londoners to be able to assess progress.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Thank you. For the cause of this Committee, your department has often been very good at the qualitative assessments, we can find quite easily the story behind what has happened

and often the rationale as to why a particular thing has been done or not. What seems to be tougher from a scrutiny point of view is finding the raw hard data, the quantitative aspect of that. I am hoping that your five years of experience will mean that we have a step change in that. We are often told what has been spent, but we are not regularly told what the outcome of that spending has been. If we spend anything above £50, quite frankly, I want to know where it went, how impactful it was, and should we do it again? Londoners will need to know that, as you have pointed out on many occasions, the budget, there is not a lot of surplus there. Therefore, that activity will be very important.

Unmesh Desai AM: This Committee has been concerned about how we measure the performance of the VRU. Quite rightly, very rightly, a lot of money has been invested in this very important initiative and the long-term thinking. But concern has been expressed about the lack of measurement 18 months on. At first we were told it is early days and so on, but 18 months on we now expect, should you be confirmed, to have much more robust monitoring of that unit's performance. In terms of outputs in particular, how many people have been diverted away from violence and so on.

Sophie Linden: I have given you some figures around the 88,000 young people who have been engaged with and have things to do because of the work of the VRU. The VRU will be part of the performance assessments, the quarterly performance reports, in the way that I have described going forward. You will be able to see that. There is really in-depth evaluation going on. There is a fantastic amount of work, really thoughtful work, as there is with the MOPAC contracts and commissioning, really thoughtful work of how we evaluate this and how we know it is making a difference.

The real trick is - and this is not just around the VRU - having the courage to invest in things that are not yet proven and having the courage to do that, but being able to monitor it sufficiently and effectively that you know when they are working, but you also know when they are not working and you can take those difficult decisions to stop the funding. That is the real trick.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Thank you for that answer. That is why we would want to have better KPIs. We are all in agreement there.

Unmesh Desai AM: In the context of violence against women and girls, I applaud the work that you have done over the last five years and a lot of resources have gone into it. But the appalling rape conviction figures that we saw reported in Monday's press: 1.6%, down from the 3% of last year, so what are your thoughts? I know it is not just the police, it is the Crown Prosecution Service, but using your convening powers, the power of your office to tackle this particular area.

Sophie Linden: Yes. Unfortunately, those figures that came out recently are not a surprise. Unfortunately, we know too well that rape convictions are just appalling, and they are appalling for a number of reasons. We know what the reasons are in MOPAC because MOPAC worked with the Victims Commissioner and published a review of rape cases. We know the victim support, the journey of the victim and how well supported the victim is, is crucial in trying to get a conviction. We know that; therefore Claire Waxman [Victims' Commissioner] and I are working together on this. Claire sits on the National Rape Review group. I am the lead for the Association of Police and Crime Commission on Victims. I work with Ministers around this as well.

As I said previously, one of the things that we are really keen to ensure is that the National Rape Review is going to make recommendations possibly by the end of the month or early June [2021]. This is not about tinkering. This is not about just tweaking little things in the system. There needs to be a fundamental rethink in how rape is investigated. MOPAC has led a proposal to the Home Office to transform the investigation of

rape. I really hope, genuinely, and we have had very good conversations with the Home Office, I really hope that is going to be funded because it will make a step change.

Unmesh Desai AM: Safer Neighbourhood Boards, community engagement, the work of MOPAC, unless I missed it, there is no reference to community engagement. I know you talk in your confirmation opening statement about community monitoring of stop and search, and so on. But the relationship with Safer Neighbourhood Boards, some of them do very good work, some feel they are not supported properly by MOPAC. We have had these discussions before. How is the future going in terms of what we need, as I said in my report Policing with Consent, structured community engagement? I know how in the old days when I talk of police community consultative groups. But right now there is nothing like that at the borough level.

Sophie Linden: That is part of the review that I talk about. There was a commitment from the Action Plan on trust and confidence in policing. We have kicked that review off. That is part of it and there will be recommendations from that. We will talk to communities; we will talk to Safer Neighbourhood Boards. That is what we are doing at the moment. I recognise that we need to change. We need to build on the good practice and make sure that they are doing the job that they set out to do.

Unmesh Desai AM: Put that on the agenda. I have run out of time, Chair. Thank you.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Thank you very much. I would like to thank Sophie for turning up and answering all our questions. We really appreciate that, Sophie. You are free to go if you would like or you could stay and listen to the rest of the proceedings. I am imagining you will probably leave.

The Committee is now required to make a decision on its recommendation to the Mayor as to whether or not the nominee should be reappointed to the office of Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime. I will welcome comments from Members.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): She should be appointed but with definite caveats around that to ensure that specific things are looked at.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Such as?

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): As a beginning, public confidence in the police is dropping like a stone. We need to look at and address that. Some of the figures that I was reading - and then was rudely interrupted - and some of these percentages of robbery, rape, etc, the percentages of increasing crimes is absolutely appalling and we need to have a way out of that. She needs to show us more how she is going to address that. I know it is the favourite thing to blame the Government for everything, but at the end of the day there is a big budget there and crime is spiralling. I am concerned that when we come out of lockdown, which we surely will do, hopefully next month, we all have our fingers crossed, I want to know that there is a plan in place to make sure that crime levels do not return to the pre-pandemic levels.

Tony Devenish AM: I would agree with my colleague, Assembly Member Hall. I would also think particularly I would like something on the Estate Strategy because AM Pidgeon made a very good point. We keep on having such an important issue that really concerns Londoners locally, and it keeps going back and back and back. I would like a delivery plan in terms of issues with the community such as that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I thought it was a very good performance today. I would expect that after five years in the role. There was a lot of detail there and some reflection on improvements, particularly with some

of the questions we have heard. I would like to support her reappointment to the post, but I would like to add in, just in the letter picking up some of the things that were discussed, improvements in correspondence, improvements in the informal meetings. I agree Sophie has picked up towards the end of the term, they did start to have all Committees in more briefings. I would expect to perhaps once a year have a one-to-one just to catch up on issues, as I do with other Deputy Mayors on looking at how she improves her working relationship with cross-party leads on the Police and Crime Committee. The point that came out at the end was very strong on KPIs and how we can measure looking at that. I felt they were the points that I would like to bring out in the correspondence.

Unmesh Desai AM: I was here in 2016 when we confirmed Sophie with some caveats. That happened in 2012 as well. I thought it was a very good performance. There are some key issues of concern that were raised, like outputs. The Deputy Mayor did enough to be confirmed without any caveats. But I can see which way the wind is blowing, and we have to work as a Committee. It depends on how we word these caveats. I am not saying that we should not add our concerns, but certainly a couple of issues that have been highlighted, so looking at the procedure we could agree in principle to confirm with caveats, but are we going to get something in writing?

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): I will come to the procedures later.

Léonie Cooper AM: I am happy to add some caveats to the letter. She did give a good performance and she answered everything that we put to her on her track record and her capacity and capability and also looking forward, which was the important thing, the learning from the last five years. It is important though that we do not put in caveats without putting them in the context. I know questions about 38 police stations being closed in the last five years, or scheduled for closure, 76 police stations were closed in the previous eight years under the previous Mayor. The context of the budget is also really important, both around the Estate Strategy, but also because we know that many of the crime indicators that Assembly Member Hall just referred to have been rising since the decline in numbers of the MPS from 2014 onwards.

I do not mind putting caveats in, but we need to be clear when they are something that relate just specifically to something that is within the power of the Deputy Mayor, or indeed the Mayor, to impact. We need to contextualise them when they are within an overall context that is impacted by things that this Committee and many others have spoken to Government about in terms of support for the MPS. We know that the impact on the police in terms of numbers going down - and they did go down in the previous five years to an all-time low and they have now started to come back up - we know that has a big impact on so many of the areas that we have all just been talking about.

We will not see the figures improving until we definitely have stabilised with the new structure, which is why I asked that question about the BCU restructuring and I am glad to hear that it can be flexible for an increase in numbers. But we will not see much happening without that wider support. I would argue that the Government has recognised that by talking about implementing increases in police numbers nationally and it is not just a London thing. Therefore, I would want that contextualised myself.

Caroline Russell AM: I would also like to support confirmation. The points raised by Assembly Member Pidgeon about MOPAC correspondence and also the meetings with group leads, those are really useful points to include. I would agree with Assembly Member Cooper's point about the need for context if there were any points that are being made that relate to things like budget and stuff that just needs that bit of context about the overall situation.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Thank you for your comments. Let me just say this: I believe it was a very good performance and I also will support confirmation. For me, my biggest worry is around KPIs and how we measure outputs. Therefore, that is a comment I will add to the letter. But I want to be clear. Much of the conversation we have had here has been about the role, and this is about the person in the role. The idea that we will be putting in some of these things, they simply will not be in the letter, and the context of the wider world of policing will not be in this letter. This letter is about the individual and the skills that they bring to prosecute this position.

Therefore, any comments made in the letter will be about the individual. I will not be adding any comments that are advantageous to any of us politically. Of course, you will see the letter as well. I will be focusing on Sophie's performance this morning and her particular unique skill that she has tried to display this morning that she brings to this role. This is a recruitment process, not a point for us to have our political differences here. We have all year and a number of Committees to have those conversations. When you see this letter you will see that it is focused on the performance this morning and some of the things we would like to see change on a personal level to deliver more accurately what we believe are the needs of Londoners around Police and Crime Deputy Mayors. That is what you will see in that letter.

Please correct me if I am wrong. I believe we have an accord on a confirmation of Sophie Linden as Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime with a few caveats that we will add in a letter that we write to the Mayor.

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman): With sign-off later.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Yes, absolutely. I hope I made it quite clear when I said you will see the letter. You will see the letter before it goes. We have an accord there?

All: Agreed.

Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman): Thank you very much. A letter will be sent to the Mayor following this meeting to confirm the Committee's recommendation. That concludes today's meeting.