

**London Assembly Police and Crime Committee — Wednesday 23 June 2021****Transcript of Item 5 — Question and Answer Session with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and Metropolitan Police Service**

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** We can now move on to our main item of business, the question and answer session with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). I would like to welcome our guests, Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and Sir Stephen House [QPM], Deputy Commissioner for the MPS, who is on our video screen because he is remotely coming into the meeting.

Before we move on to the question and answer session, the Deputy Commissioner has agreed to provide an opening statement following the publication of the Daniel Morgan Independent Panel report last week. Please do go ahead, Deputy Commissioner.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Last week, the Daniel Morgan Independent Panel published their report following an 8-year inquiry. On behalf of the MPS, I would like to join both the Commissioner [of Police of the Metropolis, Cressida Dick DBE QPM] and the Assistant Commissioner, Nick Ephgrave [QPM], in apologising to the family of Daniel Morgan for our failure to bring those responsible to justice. It is quite clear that our failings compounded the pain suffered by Daniel Morgan's family, and for this we profoundly apologise. As the Commissioner has said, we recognise that the family have shown incredible grit, determination and courage over the years since the terrible murder. I hope the report provides the family with some of the answers to questions that have arisen over the past 34 years, and I know from speaking to her yesterday that the Commissioner will shortly be writing directly to the Morgan family to set out the next steps that we, as an organisation, will be taking.

The report is clearly significant and very detailed. We have been working at pace since last Tuesday when it came out to consider its conclusions and recommendations. That work is continuing. It is already clear that there is much in the report that we can and intend to learn from. There are also many areas where we have made significant progress since the murder of Daniel Morgan. I am pleased to be able to update the Committee today that the Commissioner has already appointed Deputy Assistant Commissioner Barbara Gray to lead our response to the Panel's report. Barbara will provide regular reports to me and the Commissioner to ensure that all necessary actions and learning is appropriately undertaken.

We also welcome the Home Secretary's [The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP] announcement that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) will begin to work in this area as well. As you would expect, we have already begun conversations with the Inspectorate to ensure their work can begin in earnest as soon as possible and that we co-operate fully with their inspection.

As Assembly Members will know very well from their involvement over the years, this case stretches over four decades. Since the murder of Daniel Morgan, the MPS has continually tried to find justice for him and his family, and we will continue to do so. Members will remember that within a month of the murder, six men were arrested, three civilians and three Metropolitan Police Officers were arrested on suspicion of murder. Through six major investigations, other people had been arrested but, to date, no one has been successfully convicted of the crime. Thousands of lines of inquiry have been pursued and there have been independent assessments and five forensic reviews. The most recent forensic review concluded in 2012.

I want to be very clear that we accept and deeply regret that corruption played a major part in the failure of the first investigation into Daniel Morgan's murder. It is quite clear that acts of individual police officers undermined the investigation, and as a senior police officer of 37 years' service I deeply, deeply regret that. It is a source of anger and sadness to all right-thinking police officers that this happened. The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) defines corruption as "the improper exercise of power or privilege for the purpose of achieving a personal benefit or a benefit or detriment to another person". The MPS does not accept that we are institutionally corrupt in this way. We do not accept that we do not have the necessary framework to identify and bring to book those who would abuse the privilege of wearing a police uniform. We do not accept that corruption followed this case throughout the decades that we have been trying to find the offenders.

Since Daniel's murder, we have completely overhauled our ability to root out corruption and ensure that every officer and member of staff understands their responsibility to the public to stand up for fundamental values of integrity, compassion, courage. But we are not complacent. The threat of corruption is constantly with us and it is constantly evolving. It is a social evil. It is not limited to policing and it remains an ever-present danger. We have the largest anticorruption command in the country and have invested heavily over the past 30 years in a long-term, sustained and sustainable anticorruption culture. I am confident that we have never been better at finding corruption and getting rid of it.

The Panel accuses the MPS of being institutionally corrupt in the sense that we are alleged to have put the defence of our own reputation and image ahead of our duty to the public that we serve. I repeat that we do not accept that we are institutionally corrupt in this way. The current leadership of this organisation that I work with prides itself on our integrity and our courage. I am speaking personally here; I would not belong to an organisation that I thought was institutionally corrupt. I am proud of the officers that work in the MPS and their dedication to public service. We are all very proud of the brave and dedicated professional officers and staff who work in this organisation.

However, I do completely recognise that occasionally pride can translate into over-defensiveness. We are probably the most scrutinised police service in the world, and we have to be mature and grown up enough to accept that is a benefit of working in a democracy. Occasionally, we may be overly defensive. I accept that as an organisation we could listen more. All organisations could. But we could do more to be open and transparent, to explain what we do and why we do it. Part of the function of the London Assembly is to make sure that we are held to account, and we recognise that is a vital part in gaining and retaining public confidence and trust. We will work with anyone to pursue our mission of becoming the most trusted police service in the world and we are open to learning about how we could do that better.

The Panel also criticises over-provision of information to the inquiry itself. Any claim that we intentionally delayed or obstructed the Panel's work is, in our view, not correct. In fact, we think we provided exceptional disclosure to the inquiry despite the significant challenges. It was essential that extremely sensitive material was shared in a secure way that protected informants, witnesses, and covert techniques, many of which were deployed to try to find Daniel's killers. We went further with disclosure than ever before and we took more risks than ever before in releasing information to the Panel. The fact that an advance security read was necessary before the report was released to the public shows the sensitivity of some of the material. There was absolutely no advantage to the MPS in being anything other than completely open.

But I go back to my point that we are sometimes overly defensive and we will certainly read the report with great detail and we will listen to anyone who wants to speak to us. We will listen to the HMICFRS in terms of how we could interact more effectively with inquiry panels that are currently in place, or those that are set up to deal with issues in the future. We are certainly very willing to learn in that area.

Finally, I would like to just highlight there is still a possibility of solving this murder, however remote that may appear at the moment. Our work to make that happen will not stop no matter how much time passes. You will have heard from various homicide investigators in other cases about how allegiances change and how people throughout the years change their attitudes. It is not unusual, and in fact has happened several times in the last few years, for people to come in and confess to homicides that took place decades previously. This is especially true in a case such as this. It is never too late for anyone to do the right thing.

In addition, I can announce that we have commissioned a new forensic review to look at a series of exhibits linked to this case. This is a process we conduct in all unsolved homicides periodically and is something we have considered in this case for some time. We feel the conclusion of the Panel report now marks the right time for this process to take place. You will be well aware that in other cases advances in DNA and forensic technology have led to new and compelling evidence coming to light, and it may be that could happen in this case. We certainly hope it will. We will always review any new evidence that comes to light and do all we can to bring those responsible for the murder to justice.

I know that Assembly Members, past and present, have scrutinised this case over many years. I also know the Committee will want to understand how the MPS is going to take this report and its recommendations forward. For the avoidance of doubt, we are committed now to ensuring that the Police and Crime Committee is kept informed and we will be happy to answer any questions about our plans and progress either at this meeting or at forthcoming meetings where I am sure it will be a subject of interest to you all.

Chairman, thank you for your indulgence in allowing me to read out the statement.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Thank you very much, Deputy Commissioner. Members, can I ask do Group Leads have any questions they want to ask now or do you want to wait until we have our session?

**Len Duvall AM:** Just very quickly - we should echo the Deputy Commissioner's announcement. Someone out there in the London community has information that is important to the police. If this case is still ongoing, then they should come forward and, Chairman, you should issue a statement on behalf of this Committee, maybe a joint statement with the Deputy Mayor [for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden], calling for those people to come forward. There are people out there who know exactly what went on and they need to speak to the police as a matter of urgency to give justice to the family. We should try to do that if we can collectively agree that around this table.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Thank you for your comments, Assembly Member Duvall. I will certainly issue a statement along those lines.

**Len Duvall AM:** We need to seek clarification, because we will be holding future meetings at some stage on this issue. Deputy Commissioner, on the allegation against you of defensiveness and actions that relate to that, in terms of leading to delays, your argument is that should not count as systemic corruption, which I think is what the Panel is taking into account. They are taking in the whole of the issues over the last 37 years, but in particular in terms of how you dealt with this inquiry. Are you acknowledging, then, that sometimes the MPS, in terms of dealing with public inquiries or other issues, can act in a manner that is too defensive, and that doing so then causes some difficulty for the MPS? It seems to me that it goes to the heart of the matter about trust and confidence, about how you carry on and learn the lessons from this inquiry. Can you just explain that aspect in a little bit more detail?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I suppose what I am trying to point out is that there are different definitions of corruption here. The Panel has one definition,

which talks about the defensiveness and placing our own reputation above other things. That is not the NPCC's definition of corruption, nor is it the Independent Office for Police Conduct's definition of corruption. That causes a big problem straight away in terms of clarity of communication on this issue.

What I am saying is that we refute very clearly any suggestion that in this case we did anything to delay or obstruct the work. The Commissioner has been asked about that in public and has been very, very clear. She said, "I did not obstruct the work. I set out with my team who were well-resourced to ensure that we gave the Panel maximum co-operation and that we did full disclosure as quickly as possible." It is important to point out that the Panel had access to all the documentation in relation to the Daniel Morgan inquiry from 2015 onwards. This is a huge, huge inquiry with millions of pages of documents, with thousands of exhibits and interviews with suspects and witnesses and other people involved. So we do not believe, as the Commissioner has said very clearly, that we obstructed the Panel. What I have said is that, we will take on board any lessons to be learned going forward about how we can communicate better with panels.

It is important to point out that there are 24 recommendations from the Panel, and a good number of those recommendations are not addressed to the MPS, they are addressed to the Government in how they set up panels in the future. That is an acceptance that there was an issue here of clarity on both sides. Panels must be set up with the right composition and the right powers to effectively carry out their work. There is a bigger issue, a bigger public governance issue here in terms of how panels are set up and how they are given their powers to investigate whatever public body, whether it is the police or others. But I am absolutely clear that we do not accept that we obstructed this Panel in any shape or form. In fact, we feel we went a very long way to meet all their needs as quickly as we possibly could. I know this because I have spoken to members of the team who have worked for years to try to give the Panel what they need.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Deputy Commissioner, I listened carefully to what you have said this morning, and also to what the Commissioner said last Tuesday when the report came out. You have apologised for a failure to bring anyone to justice. But I am not sure I have heard - and it maybe I just have not quite caught it - an apology for the corruption that you have accepted took place, at least in part. Have you apologised for the corruption?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I absolutely believe that we have. But if anyone thinks that we have not, then can I here and now apologise for the corruption. It is not just that we are sorry for it, frankly I personally feel ashamed of the corruption. No right-thinking police officer in this organisation, myself included, wants to have any element of corruption inside this organisation. It clearly played a part in the early parts of the investigation. That is obvious because in the first month of the investigation we arrested three police officers in connection with the homicide. From an early point, within a month of the homicide, we knew that corruption was an issue and took action on that. That is a matter of deep regret, deep shame, for the organisation. Of course it is. Any corrupt officer brings discredit and shame on the organisation. Everyone who carries a warrant card and our civilian staff who work alongside us are rightly ashamed when that sort of thing happens. However, we have to be realistic and accept that it does. But in answer to your question directly, if that is not clear to the public or the media or indeed the Morgan family that we have, I am very happy here to apologise for the corruption that took place in the early stages of the homicide. It is clear that it did, and it is clear that it should not. I am very sorry that it did happen.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Thank you for the clarity.

**Tony Devenish AM:** Deputy Commissioner, [The Rt Hon Lord] David Blunkett wrote a very good article in *The Sunday Times* on this very subject and I will just quote one sentence. He says the Commissioner, "needs to

explain how she is preventing rather than coping with unacceptable behaviour and practice". Do you agree with that and will you come back in your full response and address that point?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I read the article myself. I agreed with some, but not all of it, as you might expect. But I absolutely agree with that. We are obliged to come back and explain to the public through yourselves and other bodies what we are doing to try to prevent corruption coming into the organisation and, where we identify it, to deal with it as effectively as we possibly can, either through the criminal courts or exiting those people from the organisation.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** We are now going to move on to our first question and it is addressed to you, Deputy Commissioner. Is the MPS adequately resourced to police protests and demonstrations in London? Do officers have the right amount of protective equipment?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** In the vast majority of cases, the MPS is perfectly able to deal with protests in London. We see that on a daily basis in the capital, and we have done since the inception of the MPS nearly 200 years ago. But the interesting point in your question is that not in all cases of course, because we do occasionally rely on mutual aid from other police forces. The most extensive that I am ever aware of - probably apart from the policing of the Olympics, which was an event, not a protest - but in terms of protests would be the Extinction Rebellion protests that took place not so long ago where we had mutual aid from virtually every other police force in the United Kingdom, including Police Scotland. Because the numbers of demonstrators were so high and because of the action we took, in fact people will know we arrested several thousand protestors at those demonstrations, so we had to call on mutual aid.

There is a system across the United Kingdom where any force can call on other forces to come and assist them with either the numbers of officers or specialist officers. For the MPS, we are greatly imbalanced in that we are usually donors rather than recipients of that mutual aid. We often give mutual aid to other forces. For example, for the G7 that just finished recently in Cornwall, we contributed nearly 1,000 officers to the policing of that event. We will be doing something no doubt quite similar to the Conference of the Parties event in Glasgow later on this year. We do occasionally call on mutual aid, but not very often.

Do we have the right resources? I believe we have the right numbers of officers to deal with it. We have a fantastic command team that is the most experienced in the United Kingdom in dealing with protests. Our equipment is regularly reviewed and we believe it is fit for purpose. I will leave it there, but I am happy to take more questions.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** There were comments made earlier this year about the MPS not having the right equipment. Have you made steps to address that?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** If I may, I would interpret that as we have the right equipment. The criticism was, were officers wearing the right equipment? That is more of a tactical decision at the time for each operation. The equipment is available. We have public order equipment for officers. For example, we have - within the MPS - about 4,000 officers who are trained to what we call level 2 public order, and another nearly 650 trained to level 1, which is basically levels of training so that they are more proficient in dealing with public order situations than the bulk of our officers. Each of those nearly 4,500 officers has their own personal issue protective equipment to deal with public order situations. They have helmets, they have body protectors and they are equipped with shields as well if they need those shields. They have the equipment.

The question is more around the fact that a public order commander for each event will take a decision as to what stated equipment he or she wants the officers to be wearing at any particular time. That will vary throughout the demonstration depending on the nature of the demonstration and any perceived threat that the officers might be facing, either to other members of the public or to themselves.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Let me give you a slightly different question then, because I take your point that the equipment is there and it is a decision if it is used or not. What lessons have been learned by the MPS following debriefs after recent protests in London? Does the MPS need to change its approach, including when it deploys equipment and when it does not? What are the main challenges around that you are picking up from your debriefs and the changes that you plan to make, if any?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Every operation has a debrief, and a significant part of that is were the tactics right, was the equipment right, were the decisions made at the right time and with sufficient speed? There is always a balance to be found here, which is that for officer safety, if we have any information about violence, the obvious safest aspect here is to fully equip officers with full protective equipment from the start of any demonstration. That means that they would face demonstrators from the start wearing protective helmets with the flip-down visors, they would be wearing body armour and they would have shields and they would have batons drawn.

That is not an appropriate response to the vast majority of demonstrations, which are completely peaceful. But there is always the danger of some violence erupting because people feel strongly about the things they are demonstrating about, otherwise they would not be demonstrating in the first place. Our commanders know that there is always a chance for an escalation of violence. The question is how quickly we respond to that escalation. That is often dependent on the intelligence that we have on the demonstration, what nature it is going to be, the volume of people, the attitude of the people, whether there is likely to be violence, how extreme they may be, etc.

That is an area where we do face challenge in terms of gathering the intelligence. There is an issue of proportionality in terms of what tactics we can use to gather the intelligence. Often all we can do is rely on contact with the organisers of the demonstration and anything that is available on open-source social media about what the nature of the demonstration will be. We also obviously will assess it based on if we know this group from the past and it was entirely peaceful in the past, it is likely to be peaceful again going forward. If it were violent, then clearly we would anticipate more violence.

The intelligence gathering is a challenging area for us. It was noted in the HMICFRS report that it is very challenging to work out exactly what is going to happen ahead of time, because demonstrations have flashpoints. Different people come to demonstrations with different levels of feeling about it. Some are determined on violence from the start; the vast majority will simply want to go about the demonstration in a peaceful, and hopefully lawful, manner.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Is the MPS approach to demonstrations in London consistent? Much of the grumbling has been around demonstrations being policed in very different ways. There are several examples, such as if you compare what happened with Extinction Rebellion to what happened with supposedly far-right groups coming out to defend statues, as they saw it. Is there consistency there?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** There is consistency in the basic principles about how we will deal with a demonstration, which is if the demonstration is lawful then we will deal with it in a certain way. If it is unlawful then we will deal with it in a different way. If it is violently unlawful we will go in a different direction. But I do have to say, every demonstration has its own challenge, its

own character. We do not, therefore, work to a proforma. To do that would mean that we would be disproportionate in how we deal with different demonstrations; each one is judged on its own merits, on its own intelligence, and each commander will make an assessment ahead of the demonstration or the event as to how they will put together the tactics to deal with that.

Flexibility is a key principle, so we can change our posture if necessary to try to protect the public and our officers as much as we possibly can. But we are consistent in our principles, which is that we will work with the organisers. We will try to maintain a peaceful demonstration and we will try to maintain a lawful demonstration. If it becomes a violent situation, then we will escalate our tactics and we will escalate our protective equipment. Do we do that? Sometimes we can anticipate. We cannot always anticipate. Sometimes, because there is violence against police officers, we suffer injuries to police officers, which is deeply regrettable. But I am afraid sometimes it is almost inevitable with some of the groups that we face.

A policing operation against different groups demonstrating on different things will often look very different. Because the groups are different. Because the passion is different. The threat of violence is different. So it may not look consistent to the public. There are consistent principles, but each one has to be judged on its own circumstances.

**Tony Devenish AM:** Deputy Commissioner, I am not quite sure that you answered AM Bailey's last question so I am going to ask it slightly differently. Why is there a perception that you do not police demonstrations in London on a consistent basis?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I am sorry if I did not answer the question. I certainly tried to. Why is there a perception? It is difficult for me to say why there is a perception to be honest. That may be because people perceive it differently and I do not know why they would do that. Or the media may report it differently. Again, I cannot comment on why the media might be doing that. People will form their own opinions on what they see. We are often accused by certain parts of the media as not doing anything about Extinction Rebellion and tolerating Extinction Rebellion. We arrested I think 4,000 people over the two big Extinction Rebellion demonstrations. To me, that is doing quite a lot. It is the largest number of arrests we have ever made in a public order situation.

The media and the public will have their own perceptions based on their own views of what we do and how we react. All I can say is that we have consistent principles about how we go about policing public order, but we expect our public order commanders - who again, I would say, are the best in the world in terms of policing - we expect them to design a bespoke plan for each of the demonstrations that we face.

**Tony Devenish AM:** I was talking about the public rather than the media. I am not as concerned about the media as some people are. Let me give you an analogy I was given by a senior resident very recently. He lives on the path of all these demonstrations from Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter through to the Palestinian demonstrations recently - and he put it very well when he said the MPS is a bit like changing the gears on a car, sometimes they do it quite well but sometimes, regrettably, you take quite a long time between going from first gear to second gear, to third gear, to fourth. A good example of that is Extinction Rebellion where you did arrest a lot of people, but you took an awfully long time before you started doing it. Then at the recent Palestinian demonstrations, my residents were particularly disgusted about, not the fact they had the right to demonstrate, but they were wandering around back streets all over London with hate-filled banners. You got your act together on the second day to some extent, and the second weekend far more. But it is often the first day of the demonstration where there is no consistency because I guess you are learning on the path. I wonder if you can comment on that, because it is your initial response and the consistency in your initial response to a demonstration in the first few hours that I am always quite concerned about.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** It is a very good question, but again I would say that we design our public order response to be bespoke to each of the demonstrations that we deal with. If we have dealt with demonstrations before and they have been violent before, then we will obviously be – to use your analogy – in the right gear and fairly geared-up for that demonstration being violent. If it is not, then that is a pleasant development. If we are dealing with demonstrations of groups that we have never dealt with before, using tactics we have never dealt with before, then quite clearly as we live in a democracy, as you identified, there is a right to protest so long as you do that lawfully. Therefore, if a demonstration commences lawfully – and the vast majority both commence and finish lawfully – but most demonstrations start off lawful and peaceful. Therefore, our policing response to that is one that is appropriate and responsive to that, proportionate to that.

If the demonstration then becomes unlawful and then proceeds to become violent, then the police will react to that. But we are by necessity reacting rather than being proactive simply because there is a right to demonstrate guaranteed by legislation. The most efficient police service, if you were simply interested in having no demonstrations, then you could deal with that. But that is not our stance, as you well know. Therefore, we are often reacting to how a demonstration will develop. I think that is simply the way things will have to be because we are reactive rather than proactive in relation to many of the demonstrations. We have to wait to see how they develop.

**Tony Devenish AM:** I must say I am not particularly happy with that answer. Deputy Mayor, I guess of the two main recent examples, one was perhaps more of an amusing example, a boat left in Piccadilly Circus. I was not particularly happy with that there for weeks. But the one that really concerned me, and I will come back to, was the hate-filled banners last month for the Palestinian demonstrators. Not just one or two, but literally hundreds of people wandering around my constituency with hate-filled banners. I did not see the police deal with any of them and I was watching for hours. Do you have a comment on that, Deputy Mayor?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** In terms of the examples that you give, clearly these are operational decisions for individual police officers on the streets as to whether banners that are being carried constitute a hate crime or constitute trying to provoke a hate crime. Those are operational decisions of the MPS. In terms of what the Deputy Commissioner has said, we do have the best public order policing probably in the world. There are very difficult decisions that are taken, not just day to day, but minute to minute, as to what is an appropriate level of enforcement, an appropriate interaction or engagement with protestors. The MPS does extremely well in very difficult circumstances on many occasions in London.

To go back to your first question, Chairman, around whether the MPS have the appropriate resources around policing individual protests, obviously the Deputy Commissioner has been very clear that for individual protests on the vast majority of occasions, yes they do. Occasionally they have to get mutual aid. One of the things you as a Committee may be interested in looking at is the overall burden on the MPS of the number of protests that rightly – I am not at all suggesting that there should not be protests, we are the capital city, people have a lot to protest about and there are very strong feelings – but that burden on the force as a whole, strategically, financially.

Then also that burden on individual officers. The Deputy Commissioner talked about the level 2 trained officers. They have fantastic training, but they go back to their day jobs. They are policing in the boroughs. They are doing neighbourhood policing. They are working long shifts. There is a real burden. If you talk to the senior leadership of the MPS at the moment, one of the worries and risks, one of the concerns they have is of course the policing of London, but also the fatigue of officers. We really have to make sure that the MPS has the resources and the officers it needs, not just to police the crime and the neighbourhoods of London, but as a capital city to be able to police the protests.



**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** To go back to this question of banners, do you think there is a role for the Mayor to be more vociferous in letting people know, if they are going to protest in London, they need to protest within the law? These banners in particular he could say something on.

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** As I have said, the individual circumstances of individual banners are operational matters for individual officers on the streets and for the public order command. The Mayor, the MPS and I have been very vociferous, very clear, that there is no place in London, on the streets of London, on any banners, for hate. For trying to provoke hate, there is absolutely no place. The MPS does take a zero-tolerance approach to that. I do not think the Mayor could be clearer about that. In fact, not only is he very clear about that zero-tolerance approach to hate, he has been investing in projects and programmes to really try to make sure people understand, to get that cohesion, that in London we are tackling where hate is bubbling and we are making sure that there are projects and programmes to do that. The Mayor is really clear about communicating that there is no place for hate in London, but also making sure that there are projects and programmes that are trying to prevent that hate from developing.

**Tony Devenish AM:** Deputy Commissioner, there were not that many arrests after the Palestinian events, but we are often told that arrests follow afterwards. Will you be able to write to us with the level of arrests over the last two weekends of last month, please?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Yes.

**Tony Devenish AM:** Thank you.

**Len Duvall AM:** My questions concern resources to the MPS as well as powers. Let us deal with the resources one first. In relation to policing of demonstrations, there is a cost to it. That is not an argument not to allow peaceful protests to be undertaken. But the MPS's underfunding through the National and International Capital City (NICC) grant, despite the independent panel's review to Government saying it should be paid in full, what would be the implications of that? Would we have more officers for demonstrations, but also more officers to do other policing if that was paid in full? How would that money be used if you got it?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Firstly, I agree with your comments. We are still pushing the Government to fully fund the NICC grant. It covers a range of issues, organised crime, and the fact that as a capital city and a global city we do attract a great deal of demonstrations and public order events. An example being the one that has just been mentioned, which is tension in the Middle East leading to demonstrations and policing needed on the streets. We would anticipate that, if we were fully funded for NICC, which is many tens of millions of pounds extra funding, then we would be able to increase the number of officers.

We would be able to increase officers within our serious crime commands to deal with organised crime, which also affects us because we are a global capital city. But also the public order element. Members may not be aware, but our number one response to public order policing, our most highly trained officers are Territorial Support Group (TSG) officers. The TSG has been reduced in numbers in the last ten to 15 years. As the MPS numbers were cut, the TSG numbers were cut proportionately as well. They are lower than they used to be. That does mean that we have fewer highly trained officers to deal with public order than we used to.

I still say that we are adequately resourced for it, but we could always use more resource. More resource would mean that we would be able to provide specialist officers policing more of these events and we would be able to deal more effectively with some of the more violent situations. That stands to reason, really.

It would also relieve the burden that the Deputy Mayor talked about in terms of the drain on officers. Just for Members' knowledge, in terms of in the financial year 2019/20, officers in the MPS spent 137,000 tours of duty on demonstrations. That is 137,000 tours of duty which could have been spent in local policing. The abstraction from local policing is significant. With the exception of the TSG, which is only about 450 of the officers, the vast bulk of our public order trained officers are working on response teams and on safer neighbourhood teams and are abstracted for that purpose. Therefore, extra money would mean that abstraction would be lessened.

**Len Duvall AM:** We discussed the new powers here at the Assembly post the Extinction Rebellion demonstrations, the need for overall policing powers in relation to demonstrations. It is quite controversial. I was a bit shocked on reading in detail about that. But it is going through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. What extra work and training will be undertaken if it goes through Parliament unamended to ensure officers are applying new powers properly and appropriately? The Chairman mentioned consistency earlier on. The consistency of knowing what is going to happen. If you are a peaceful demonstration it will be all right. If it becomes unlawful, is something going to happen or not going to happen around that? What is the thinking from the MPS around these new powers?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Some of the powers in the Bill that is going through Parliament - itself ironically causing demonstrations and public order situations - we have asked for. In the main, we asked for clarity around certain sections that already exist in the public order legislation, just effectively to equalise our ability to put conditions on various marches and demonstrations. The training that would take place would simply be we would factor it into our level 1 officers, who are the vast bulk of the MPS, would get some basic training in it so that they are aware of changes in public order legislation. Our more highly trained officers who are deployed on public order situations more would get more training so that they were aware of what the legislation requires.

The ones that we have asked for, the equalisation in terms of the ability to put conditions on, is more for the --

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** We are experiencing technical difficulties. Hopefully the Deputy Commissioner comes back to us.

**Len Duvall AM:** Maybe the Deputy Mayor could help us if there is any knowledge around the preparations for that. Obviously, some of the issues and the applications of the new powers in relation to noise; demonstrations are loud by their nature. What is your understanding about how the MPS is going to apply those judgement calls that the Deputy Commissioner mentioned earlier on? Every demonstration is different but how will they apply that? Has there been any conversation with your office about some of that thinking?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** If all the clauses in the Bill at the moment do become law, I do not expect them to become law for quite a long time because it is such a mammoth Bill and it is controversial - but we have not had any conversations about how to operationalise them. I think the Deputy Commissioner is probably going to come on to training, because some of the things that they have asked for are for their more senior leadership and those that are in charge to take decisions around conditions. Therefore, it may not be a question of widespread training. But I have not had discussions about that because it seems a long way in the distance at the moment.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** Deputy Mayor, how do you monitor MPS conduct at demonstrations and hold it to account?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** In terms of oversight, we have regular discussions in terms of planning activity looking forward as to what the MPS operational response is going to be. That is just oversight. That clearly is not intervention because, as I have said, these are operational policing decisions. After major protests, as the Deputy Commissioner talked about, they have their debrief and if there are lessons to be learned around that we will have discussions around it. We also have operational oversight in terms of officers in MOPAC who are engaging with the MPS as well, at different levels, to enact that oversight.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** My colleague Assembly Member Devenish mentioned perception. As a politician, you will understand that perception is very important. When you look at a demonstration and see things like the footage that emerged of a mob walking through the streets of Central London yelling, “We will find some Jews. We want the Zionists. We want their blood.” At least one police officer was seen walking alongside that group. Did you inquire as to why arrests were not made?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** As part of oversight, when those types of incidents come to my attention, of course I do ask in terms of what happened there. That particular occasion is being reviewed and I have not had any response back yet from the MPS. But I have those discussions with the Commissioner or with the Deputy Commissioner about what has happened here, how do you assure the public and how do you particularly assure the Jewish community that your officers are taking any antisemitic or hate crime and hate instances really seriously. I do have those discussions to make sure there is that oversight and to understand that. There have been a number of instances where those types of things have come to light and then the police have made arrests. For example, the car that was in Finchley blaring out really dreadful, not just antisemitic, but misogynist statements. The MPS followed that up because it came to their attention and has made arrests.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** But do you not understand that the perception of the MPS, which we are all concerned about, is not helped when you see police officers on their knees, when they see them openly supporting Palestine. There have been some other events. As I say, a police officer walking alongside when a group are making these hateful comments towards the Jewish community. Do you not think that the perception of the MPS is damaged quite considerably because they are not seen at the time to be making any arrests, or in some instances siding with one party or another?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** There is a really important question here in terms of when videos do go viral, of course they can damage the reputation of the MPS and they can damage the confidence of some communities in the MPS’s ability to protect them. However, often those videos do not show the whole picture and when they are reviewed, either there is action that is taken afterwards, but does that land in the same way as the social media, that viral clip? Often it does not. That is a real difficulty. I accept that is a difficulty of perception. But it does not mean the MPS is not taking action where it can, that it should be taking. Of course, there is a question about reassurance to particularly the Jewish community when we are talking about these incidents. I know that the MPS is interacting and engaging with the Jewish community locally across London, across the boroughs, as am I, as are other parts of City Hall, to give them that assurance that the MPS is absolutely taking a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitism and hate.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** Well I can say to you, if there are more demonstrations of this kind and police officers stand by and are not seen to be doing something when this terrible abuse is going on, the perception of the MPS will continue to worsen. There is not one person on this Committee that would be happy about that. I would respectfully suggest something starts to happen about this. It cannot go on as it is.

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** If I might say, I do not think “something must start to happen”. As with every time, the MPS as with City Hall, we monitor what is going on in communities

and the tensions that are going on in communities. There is proactive work taken at neighbourhood level and local level to engage with synagogues, with mosques, with community leaders, to reassure. Therefore, it is not a question of the MPS needs to start to do something. There is really serious work being undertaken to give assurance to communities.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** I will change my wording. They must be seen to be doing something. That is the difference there, is it not? Do you agree with the findings from the recent HMICFRS report, its inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** There is a thematic review from HMICFRS around policing of protests across the country, which talked about the balance. Was the balance right between the policing of the protests and the ability to allow freedom of speech and the ability to allow marches and assemblies? Then what impact that has on the community.

Chief Inspector Matt Parr [Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary], who was the inspector who wrote the report, said about that question, was the balance right? There may be a need for a small amount of tweaking around that. In terms of London, the MPS in the vast majority of cases gets that balance absolutely right in terms of engaging and ensuring that people have the right to protest and the right to voice their opinions, while also - and of course there will be disruption - trying to ensure that the disruption is minimal.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** I was particularly referring to the finding that when police forces do not accurately assess the level of disruption caused or likely to be caused by a protest, the balance may tip too readily in favour of protestors. Do you agree with that?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** That can happen. In the vast majority of cases in London, which is clearly my area of oversight, the MPS takes the operational decisions that really do try to balance the right of people to protest and also the right of Londoners and visitors and businesses to carry on their everyday work. We are the capital city and there is disruption, as we all have had on many occasions, have had our journeys disrupted because of protests. In the vast majority of cases, the MPS gets that right. As the Deputy Commissioner said, they debrief, they learn the lessons and they put that into the way that they make those judgment calls going forward.

**Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman):** Having journeys disrupted is one thing; having a whole community, the Jewish community, have this sort of abuse shrieked at them is quite a separate one. We are all concerned about that.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** When Assembly Member Hall asked about demonstrations and how they are policed, you used the words if you are made aware of something, you will follow it up. Is there no routine debrief between your office and the MPS when it comes to major demonstrations in London?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** I have regular bilaterals with the MPS and I have routine forward looks as to what is happening in terms of the intelligence around protests. I chair a meeting once a week around that where we look at that. Then afterwards at bilaterals we will have a debrief if there are lessons to be learned. But if things have gone off, the protests have happened and there has been no lessons learned and there have been no issues, it is not going to be one that we will discuss.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** I understand, because we have huge protests and we have tiny ones. But is there a mechanism to trigger or does somebody say, "This is at a level that we do need to have a debrief"?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** My regular bilaterals always have a standing item of operational matters. If there are issues around protests in London they will be raised in the operational matters.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Thank you very much.

**Caroline Russell AM:** My question is about the protest at the Science Museum on Saturday evening [19 June 2021]. Thirty officers turned up to a peaceful protest of about 20 young people and scientists. What the protestors have told me is that they tried to liaise with the detective inspector, but they were told that he had no hesitation in arresting them and that they would never get jobs in the future or be able to travel. The protestors felt intimidated by this. Is it appropriate to threaten young people who are protesting peacefully like that at the outset of an engagement?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** You are obviously talking about a specific operational incident. I do not have the details of what the inspector is supposed to have said to the people who were there. I can look into it, and frankly I think it would be best to look into it and write to you. I have no doubt that demonstrators might have one view and I have no doubt that the inspector might have another, which is to say to them, "Look, you may be engaged in a peaceful demonstration. Just because it is peaceful, it does not mean it is lawful." This is something I think the public needs to understand and we all need to understand. Something can be entirely peaceful and entirely unlawful. The vast majority of the Extinction Rebellion demonstrations that took place were peaceful, but they were unlawful in our view. So, if an inspector turns up and sees people demonstrating and believes it is unlawful, he may have a conversation with them to say, "Look, you are breaking the law right now and you are potentially subject to arrest. Are you aware of what would happen if you were arrested and found guilty?" I can only assume that was what the conversation was. But I can certainly look into it and write to you. That will be better than speculating.

**Caroline Russell AM:** That would be appreciated. I have seen film footage of it and it does seem intimidating. But, yes, it would be great if you could look into it. Thank you.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Before we move on to our next session, I have a question for the Deputy Commissioner. What does the MPS do to ensure that officers remain independent and impartial while policing demonstrations? This taking of the knee, there was an officer who at the Palestinian demonstration was clearly on one side and made that quite clear to the public. Many members of the Jewish community are very distressed about that. The wider public is just quite surprised that a police officer felt he could join in. Is there anything that you do to mitigate these situations?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** There is. Thank you for the question. In reference to that specific incident where the officer gave what looks like very clear support to one side of a demonstration, that is entirely inappropriate. A number of other senior officers and I were blizzarded with comments from serving operational officers saying how unhelpful that was and how difficult it makes their job. I understand the distress it caused the Jewish community. I was in contact around those times of the Palestinian demonstrations with the Jewish community, through video calls, correspondence and phone calls through the Community Safety Trust. I accept that is a difficult thing to see. It was difficult for police officers to see as well.

In relation to taking the knee, that took place at the very early stages in relation to Black Lives Matter. We can see how controversial that is in that we still see controversy around sportsmen and women taking the knee at sporting events. But it has been made very clear to officers immediately after that happened that in a public

order situation and in an operational situation taking the knee is completely inappropriate and not to be done. That is reinforced in general at any relevant public order briefing that takes place.

At every public order briefing that takes place for officers, they are reminded of the values of the MPS, they are reminded of the Human Rights Act, and they are reminded that they must act impartially throughout the demonstration and not show favour towards the demonstration, that they are just there to police and not show any sort of support for anything. That is made very clear. We reinforced that message following the unfortunate event at the Palestinian demonstration to make sure that officers were aware of it. But it is something that officers are made aware of from day one of their training. The oath the officers take makes it very clear that they are to be impartial in these sorts of issues and that they are there to uphold the Queen's peace, they are not there to make political statements. That is reinforced throughout all training that police officers undertake. The deep concern I felt from officers inside this organisation, and some other police forces when that video clip was shown of the officer supporting the protest, underlines the fact that the vast majority of officers understand that and prize it as part of the basic DNA of British policing.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Protests, events, policing of these large matters; the HMIICFRS report that came out on the Clapham vigil for Sarah Everard criticised the MPS in terms of absence of effective communication to the Silver Commander not knowing what was going on, on the ground, and also criticisms that the council Gold Commander could not get through to the MPS Gold Commander. In your review of that, have you put in place proper communication systems and made some improvements for such events in the future?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** We pay attention to every recommendation that comes to us. The HMIICFRS report, as you well know, was extremely supportive in the main of the actions the MPS took and the actions of the officers on the night, and praised the behaviour of the officers on the evening. There were comments about communication issues that could be improved, and we have certainly taken those onboard.

**Marina Ahmad AM:** In response to concerns from women that have become more heightened recently, what proactive action has the MPS and MOPAC taken to ensure that women and girls feel safe?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** We know that many women and girls in London do not feel safe and that is a matter of real concern, not just to me but to the Mayor and senior leadership of the MPS. In terms of proactive work that we are undertaking, we are working very closely with the MPS, and I am sure the Deputy Commissioner will come on to some of these; for example, the walking with female officers happening in the local area around Clapham.

We are working with the MPS. One of the things I would point to is there has been a real step change - and I welcome this - in terms of a focus on violence against women and girls (VAWG). For example, the operational plans of the MPS attacking violence this summer, there is a focus on street violence and knife crime but there is also a focus on VAWG.

I went out with the Violent Crime Task Force in Wood Green about a week and a half ago. The briefing before they went on to the streets was about street crime, street violence and also around public space VAWG. That is very important in terms of reassurance to women and girls in London that the MPS are absolutely focusing on that violence, on reassurance and on how women and girls in London do not always feel safe on the streets and in public spaces.

There is a campaign and a message going out to women and girls that if you are being harassed in the streets of London, as the Assistant Commissioner, Louisa Rolfe [OBE], has said, our communications are that you need

to report it, you need to make sure the MPS is aware of it. Unless it is reported, and unless the MPS is aware of it, they cannot take action.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I would emphasise what the Deputy Mayor has said that the events of the summer and the tragic, horrific murder of Sarah Everard brought this into sharp focus, sharper focus for the MPS, I would say. We are developing a specific strategy for VAWG which will be launched in July [2021]. Despite that and before that, we have put much greater emphasis for our officers, particularly our dedicated officers, in terms of the Violent Crime Task Force and there are other units that focus on it, particularly in public spaces, to pay more attention to the safety and wellbeing of women and girls in public spaces. We have increased patrols in public space areas. We have re-briefed our officers in terms of women, particularly in the evening, journeying home and to make sure they are as safe as they can be in London.

The mission of the strategy is to increase confidence amongst women and girls about our response to violence against them, women and girls to feel safe and safer in London, is focusing on three specific areas to increase the safety and their perception of safety: by increasing patrols in public spaces; to work with women and women's groups to talk about where they particularly feel vulnerable and make sure we are reinforcing our presence in those areas; to work with others, to provide greater intolerance of VAWG; and to work with partners in the criminal justice system to manage offenders and to improve the outcome for victims. This takes you into the criminal justice system and its performance in relation to various offences against women and girls, particularly rape and sexual offences, which is also part of the strategy.

We have listened very carefully to the many thousands of women within our own organisation, their concerns, which has helped us understand their concerns about safety as they go about London and also helped us see the problem through a lens which we perhaps were not sufficiently focused on before, but we certainly are now through the events of the summer. It is a very clear focus for the organisation going forward.

Our Violent Crime Task Force, our Violence Suppression Units and all the officers on response teams are focused on trying to make sure that women and girls have greater confidence in public spaces in London and in the future.

**Marina Ahmad AM:** Deputy Commissioner, a question for you. The Deputy Mayor and yourself have alluded to this. What has the MPS learned from its pilot scheme taking place in Lambeth and Southwark where local women are joining police officers on patrol to share their concerns about safety and what will you do differently as a result? Also, what are the timescales for this pilot and how will its effectiveness be monitored and measured?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Thank you, that is a good question. As you know, the pilot is underway. We have 25 women officers teaming up with women from the community to walk the streets of South London and listen to the experiences and the concerns and their reflections. The aim of it is to start a conversation with women so we get a better understanding of the concerns. We can then design our response better.

Last month, we had an intense day of action cracking down on violence against women and we saw 117 people arrested in a series of reactive arrests for domestic abuse, sexual offences, and various other violent offences against women.

The sergeant who came up with the idea and who is running it, Becky Perkins, has been quoted in the

press quite extensively on this. At the moment, I would say we are still at the learning stage. I have not seen the closing report yet, but hopefully we will shortly, in relation to the pilot. I am happy then to write to you and give you the details or come back to the Committee and talk about it then.

**Marina Ahmad AM:** Thank you. Could you answer the question about monitoring and how that is going to take place, please?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** We are waiting for the pilot to finish. We will then get a readout from the pilot itself to see what lessons are learned and we will then work to implement those lessons learned across London. At the moment, as you know, it is in a tight geographic area. We want to do it across the whole of the capital.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chair):** Can I just come in? Deputy Mayor, what would your expectations be around monitoring this scheme and the indicators of its performance? What would you be looking for?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** I would be looking to understand what has changed in terms of what is being fed back to those officers that are going out on patrols with members of the public. I would look for what has been changed and look for some concrete examples of that. We seem to be talking particularly around how women feel safe in public spaces. You would want to be able to monitor that section of women through surveys and a public attitude survey, for example. That is what I would be looking for. Whether you will be able to see that in a short pilot or not is the question.

This is quite academic, I do not know if you would be able to isolate that pilot for any shifts in how women feel, because it is not just that pilot that is taking place in terms of how the MPS is working and what we are doing from City Hall. There is a lot of very good work to try to reassure women about their safety, but also to try to improve their safety. For example, I worked very closely with Amy Lamé, the Night Czar, on rolling out the Women's Night Safety Charter. It is a very important charter with over 500 businesses already signed up. We want more to sign up to that. It is not just signing up to the charter - it is about training businesses and training venues about how they ensure women feel safe and that they are safe.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chair):** Is that not the challenge? We have all these different schemes. We are spending all this money. We do not know which is good and which is bad because there is such a mishmash of things. Surely, we need to find a way of measuring these things. One of the criticisms levelled at much of the Mayor's activity in the past and with his current manifesto is sweet words, but absolutely no key performance indicators (KPI) which is a real problem because we then do not know what has worked and should we increase, or should we spend the money elsewhere? Surely, your office needs to look at everything it is doing in partnership with the MPS and design some way of measuring the effectiveness of a scheme, or is it not then a waste of money?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** I totally agree with you. There needs to be a way to measure the effectiveness of schemes. On all the projects and programmes we invest in, we have KPIs, we have careful monitoring of the contracts and impacts. What I am saying is that sometimes it is complex. Anybody who has provided any programmes will be able to say that you can see an impact, but can you isolate the impact of all schemes? Sometimes that is not possible. You can certainly see impacts and everything we invest in is very carefully monitored.

There is a sliding scale of evaluation depending on the amount of money invested from in-depth academic evaluation, like child health, for example, which is taking place. For smaller grants, we will have some outcome measures and some KPIs in that contract or that grant to make sure that what we have invested in has been delivered.



**Shaun Bailey AM (Chair):** I take your point. If you spend a small amount of money, you cannot then ask those people to do vast evaluations. Surely, your team needs to have a better idea of the tapestry because all of these small grants add up to a serious amount in the end. If we are not just going to give money out the door, surely, your team needs to look at where the small grant is, and it is their collective effect. If you have done something, that could be done in the end.

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Absolutely. I do not think we are disagreeing, and I do not think you are pointing out a gap in what we do. We do have that understanding and we do have that overview. I am very happy for you to have a briefing in terms of how we evaluate from our evidence and our insight team as well as our contract management; how we evaluate the impact as well as the value for money for the contracts and grants we give out from MOPAC. I do not disagree with you. We are doing it.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chair):** I would love to have that briefing and we do disagree, because I do not think the KPIs have been that good.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Just before I start on my questions, I want to pick up on the Deputy Commissioner talking about the new VAWG Strategy coming out in July [2021]. Does that belong to the MPS rather than your one that we are expecting, and when do we expect your revised VAWG strategy? When will you be ensuring the widest, most diverse range of stakeholders are properly engaged in the process for your new VAWG strategy?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Yes, that is the operational strategy of the MPS in terms of tackling VAWG from an operational point of view. As you know, the manifesto the Mayor committed to, refreshing the VAWG Strategy, is underway. I hope, I expect, and I want that new VAWG strategy to be out by the end of the year.

In terms of consultation, yes, of course, we will want to consult, and we want to make sure we have a wide range of views, including survivors and victims. I would also say, and it does not mean we will not undertake the consultation, we are not starting afresh. We are not starting anew. We have already and we continue to consult and engage, and we have a lot of evidence of the views of victims and survivors. We must continue to do that, but we also have a lot of evidence as to what is needed, where the gaps are and what needs to be focused on in more depth. It is not that we go out and consult afresh. We are building on the evidence and victims' and survivors' insight that we have already.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** There will be some engagement as you go through this refresh?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Yes, of course.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** I wanted to start the questions on the court backlog and conviction rates. I accept you and the MPS are not responsible for the courts and the judicial system. The Government's rape review has come out this week. They have put their hands up to say it is not working and the system is failing there.

If I start with the Deputy Mayor and then the Deputy Commissioner, what is your reaction to that? Do you think the proposed actions go far enough? What are you going to change with the MPS to do differently to try to resolve this huge issue of this backlog and the impact it is having on victims and witnesses?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Are you asking about the rape review as well in terms of the court backlogs? They are connected, but they are two slightly different things.

If I take court backlogs first, the pandemic exacerbated what was already a major problem in the courts. We already had backlogs. We already had delays. The pandemic has made that far worse. We have a huge number, especially in the Crown Courts. The Magistrates' [Courts] are not as bad as the Crown Courts. They are beginning to clear. The way that the Courts Service will talk about it is that the Magistrates are clearing more than they are taking in and so they are beginning to slowly clear the backlog. They are not out of the woods yet.

In terms of the Crown Courts, there is a really significant problem. It is a real issue, particularly for victims, with the amount of time they are waiting to get their cases to come to court. If we take rape, it is closely connected. The longer a rape victim waits, the more likely they are not to continue. The longer they wait, it is difficult for them to cope and recover and get over the trauma. The second thing is that they need more victim support and they need more support in terms of that wait in terms of getting to court. It is a real issue.

We have been calling on the Government to fundamentally invest in the system in London. We need what we call a 'super court'. We do not have one. There is one in Manchester. There is one just been announced in Loughborough. London needs one because we are not clearing the complex, multi-handed cases that we need to clear. Not just rape victims, but victims of serious and complex crime are suffering because of the delay.

In terms of the rape review that came out last week, Claire Waxman, the London Victims Commissioner, and I have really welcomed that report. I am optimistic and I think it could be a step change in how rape cases are investigated by the police and how rape victims are supported through the system. However, it has been two years in the making. There are still pilots in there; for example, section 28, pre-recorded video evidence. They should just be rolling that out. They should not be testing it again. It has been tested since 2014. It is a question of funding that is needed there. There is also a question, for example, of other pilots in there. They should just get on and really do this urgently.

In terms of our role in that, MOPAC and Claire [Waxman] undertook a really ground-breaking rape review, published in 2019. I am really pleased the Government has taken up many of the recommendations that she made. Many of the recommendations are in that rape review as well as in the rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) Action Plan; for example, pre-charge advisory meetings between the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the MPS. That is in the RASSO Action Plan. It is in the rape review. I am really pleased about that.

The other major piece of work that MOPAC has been leading is looking at how the police investigate rape, working with [Deputy Chief Constable] Sarah Crew, the NPCC lead on that, and Avon and Somerset Police. Operation Bluestone took place in Avon and Somerset. MOPAC had been working with [Professor] Betsy Stanko [OBE] and that took place in Avon and Somerset and there will be four more forces where that is going to be rolled out.

It should fundamentally change the way in which rape has been investigated. It seems an odd thing to say; it will focus on the offender, not on the victim. Operation Bluestone in Avon and Somerset showed that in about 25% of the cases they looked at, there was a repeat offender in there but they had never been identified. Many of them had never even been spoken to. There is a real, fundamental change around victim support, but also in investigating allegations of rape in the way that you would investigate an allegation of really serious assault, not a sexual crime. MOPAC and London have led the way on that and I really hope that that will make a fundamental difference.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Do you want to comment on that, Deputy Commissioner? I have, for time, tried to put two issues together but, if you have been a victim of sexual assault or rape, more than any case, you

want that concluded as soon as possible through the courts. You do not want to be having to wait years before you, hopefully, see justice.

What is your reaction to the rape review and what are you doing differently? In particular, there has been criticism about the quality of the casefiles. This probably picks up from what the Deputy Mayor was saying. The quality of what is being passed to the CPS means that lots of cases do not even make it to court. I am just wondering what you are going to be doing around that, please?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** There were a few things I wanted to say about this. In relation to the Crown Court backlog, it is getting worse, not better. The CPS figures that we have been given recently suggest that in February 2020, before COVID, the backlog was 3,400. In May 2021, a month ago, it was 7,200. This month it is 7,300. We are seeing the backlog getting worse and justice will be delayed for longer for victims in the Crown Courts. The Magistrates' Courts are going in the right direction in London. I support what the Deputy Mayor said about the court capacity in London. It is a challenge for us.

In relation to the review that came out from the Government this week, again, I would agree with the Deputy Mayor on it. It is great that this has reached the level of concern that it has. I have to say - and we have discussed this on numerous occasions at this Committee - we have been concerned about it for a number of years. It is important to say that the figures that the MPS has and our performance is not unique to the MPS. It is a national trend. There has been a downturn in rape detections reaching back to the disclosure case of R v Allan a few years ago. Allegations are up. The mix is much more challenging.

Members will know, but it is worth reminding people, that the vast majority of rape and sexual offences reported to us are not stranger attacks. They do happen, but the vast majority of stranger attacks we detect. The ones that we deal with, the big bulk of rapes and sexual assaults, are actually where the people are in a relationship or have been in a relationship. The act itself is not in question. That is not what is being challenged in the justice process. It is the circumstances that are and, effectively, it is about consent. That means that all the forensic issues are irrelevant. It is not usually going to be solved through forensics. Consent is the key and that is where digital evidence will come into play, both on the victim's and on the offender's sides and perhaps on witnesses' sides as well.

Communications digitally are far more likely before and after the event and these are key to any court case, which means we need the digital devices and we know the controversy that causes. It is an invasion of privacy for the victim and it is a huge inconvenience for the victim, because we all live our lives on mobile phones these days. Our lack of sufficient digital forensics means that there is a delay built in there. At the moment, the delay is around about four months in the more complex cases to get phones and devices downloaded and the evidence looked at. We can download it, but we are downloading sometimes terabytes of information. It is then up to the investigating officer to manually go through that. Third-party information, as we know, is also difficult.

We welcome any move by the Government to appreciate the complexities of this, but I am bound to say that our officers are working really hard on this. Their workloads are too high and we need more resources for that. It is as simple as that. We need more people to investigate the increasing numbers that we are seeing in rape and sexual offences coming to us.

In terms of the quality, the Attorney General has introduced a new policy, which means that we have to do more work pre-charge in relation to individual cases and I believe we are seeing the quality of our casefiles improve. There is a difficulty with rape and it goes back to the issue of consent. Often in a case, we can put a

case to the jury and the jury will then decide. I am not going to comment – because I do not know enough about it – on juries’ attitudes to rape trials, but we know how difficult it is for victims to give evidence. I support what the Deputy Mayor said about video evidence.

These are highly complex areas. It is not for want of trying in relation to this, but we do have a lack of resources in this area. Our investigators carry too heavy a workload and all our officers and staff who support victims of sexual assault through the court cases have too high a workload. The court backlogs have not helped with that because they have not been able to clear the cases as new cases keep coming in.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Can you just expand a bit on what ways you are supporting victims of rape and sexual assault who are waiting for cases to be heard? What more is needed? You are saying resource. That is people. That is funding. That is digital forensic capability. What are you doing to support those victims who are trying to get justice through this process?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** As the Deputy Mayor said, we have asked to be part of Operation Bluestone, which is the national approach, and we also want to look at our sexual offences officers to make sure they are doing complementary work with the Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) to make sure we are not duplicating anything there.

We have put more money into officers who support victims of rape and sexual assault through court. We have been given an extra £1 million by the Government to increase the number there. We have increased the number by about 12 members of staff to support the victims. As I reported to the last Police and Crime Committee, because of the backlogs, we have seen a large increase in the number of victims who are still going through the justice processes and so we have increased the number of support officers to try to keep the victims engaged, informed and supported through the process. We are looking at that.

We are also reviewing, in a fundamental way, how we deal with rape investigations and sexual assaults and we will learn from Operation Bluestone. We will listen to what the Government is saying.

I understand the comments about how we are going to change our approach and be offender-focused. Of course, it makes sense and nobody should be surprised. We are a law enforcement agency. We are there to put people into the criminal justice system and we want to catch offenders. However, we have to be careful that that does not give the impression that we have not been focused on offenders. Of course we are focused on offenders. That is what we are here to do, but we have also massively increased our support for the victims. If we do not support the victims, then they will withdraw from the process because it is long, complex and traumatic for them. Without their support, it is incredibly difficult to pursue the offenders. We cannot simply switch all our resources from one to the other. There has to be a balance to this and we are working hard to maintain that balance by supporting victims but focusing on offenders.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** I look forward to seeing some of these changes in practice. Did you want to add something, Deputy Mayor?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Yes, just in terms of the practicalities of how victims have been supported. Once it became clear that the court backlogs were a really significant issue and that they were not being cleared, Claire Waxman and I convened the partners in London to go through the data and to go through the detail and to prioritise those victims, to understand the number of victims who were waiting, how long they were waiting and also who was vulnerable and who needed extra support, and working with the MPS and partners to reach out to them, to offer them support again and to remind them that support is there.

At MOPAC, we have also – and all credit to the Government on this – had additional resources given to us. It was about £5 million for not just more ISVAs but Independent Domestic Violence Advisers as well, to try to make sure that we can meet the demand. We are not meeting the demand. The Deputy Commissioner is absolutely right around caseload, but it is also around caseload of support workers. It is a real issue in terms of demand for services. There was a gap already and now there are such long waiting times. It is a real problem.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Chairman, I am sorry. I missed out something quite important. Could I just come back in briefly?

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Please do.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** As Members may well know, we have already set up our Predatory Offender Units as well, which has 108 officers across London, who are very focused on repeat offenders in relation to sexual offences. Not solely sexual offences, but the fact that we are talking about violent predatory offenders indicates a big focus on sexual offenders. The Deputy Mayor and the Minister for [Crime and] Policing [Kit Malthouse MP] saw the work of the Predatory Offender Unit in one of our Basic Command Units (BCUs) recently and they are doing some great work. We have also put 12 extra staff into our Victim Support Units and Witness Support Units to try to deal with the increase in the workloads.

We have put more resources in where we see there is pressure, but I would re-emphasise that the pressure on the investigators is enormous at the moment and it is a very traumatic area to work in. We simply need more resource to increase the number of investigators, which will improve our timeliness; it will improve the quality of the casefiles; the support we can give to victims; and the focus we can bring on offenders. The Predatory Offender Units, which we have had in place for quite a while now, six months or maybe even nine months, have a very strong focus on the offenders to get them into the criminal justice system and bring them to justice.

**Sem Moema AM:** I have one brief follow-up, which is possibly more for the Deputy Commissioner, in relation to the comments you have made about the courts and the backlog. What are the numbers like and the support like in terms of using the domestic violence protection orders? Have those numbers gone up or down? It would be really helpful to understand if there is respite being given to women and their children whilst they are living through that period of time.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I cannot give you a specific answer at the moment. I will write to you but I do know from research I have already had done that we have seen an increase in our application of Clare's Law [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme] or the right to know. We have seen a big increase in that. We have seen an increase also in protection orders, but I can write to you with the specific numbers. I am afraid I do not have them in my brief.

**Len Duvall AM:** The Government's alternative to the domestic abusers register and the work done by the College of Policing is quite clear. The argument is that you have the powers to do an abusers register in a different way. Will we see that in the new operational plans of the VAWG [Strategy], explaining what powers are available to commands across London so that we can get some consistency in terms of actions and follow-up and target the most serious domestic violence abusers?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I am working very closely with Assistant Commissioner Nick Ephgrave [QPM] and I know he has spoken to the Deputy Mayor [for Policing and Crime] about this.

There is a fundamental issue with domestic abuse at the moment, which is that it is an extremely wide definition. The traditional definition of domestic abuse was focused on individuals involved in an intimate relationship. The definition was expanded years ago to be much wider than that and to include familial relationships as well, which means children and parents, brothers and sisters – non-sexual relationships. Whenever you speak to officers who are working in the domestic abuse areas of public protection, as I do quite regularly, they will say that one of the reasons their workload is so high is because they are dealing with a huge number of files and many of them are very minor familial disputes, the classic one being two brothers falling out over who has control of the television remote and one punches the other. That is included in the definition of domestic abuse and it should not be, in my candid opinion. We should be focusing on the more serious sexual and non-sexual but predatory, or intimidatory, or controlling behaviour within intimate relationships, either current or previous relationships. That is an important thing to focus on. We need a consistency around that. That will give us a greater focus on the right people, I believe, and will reduce the numbers down to a number that our officers can grapple with and deal with effectively.

In terms of creating a domestic violence register, if it was focused on those sorts of things, then I personally would have more support for it, but if it is a register based on everybody who commits domestic abuse under the current definition, then, frankly, it is not workable, not in the volumes that we deal with.

**Len Duvall AM:** We have never suggested that, but that is not an excuse to not do anything about targeting and prioritising issues of risk, which is what you do every day in your policing activities. What we are asking for is consistency in domestic abuse cases, taking into account some of the factors, but also in how we target the most violent abusers who exist within our society, and where there are police on those cases.

In terms of that, Deputy Commissioner, I asked you some questions around the outcomes of the normal response calls pre-COVID. In your response to me, you said that you did not believe that any response call would go without an outcome. It did not have to be a judicial outcome; it could be a follow-up either done by the response officer – albeit they are carrying caseloads – or by ward teams or other partners locally just to check on the victim. We know that some of these encounters lead to murder – that is what we are trying to reduce – or increased violence, or have an adverse impact on young people who may witness it or be part of the abuse itself.

So, in that sense, where have you got to in terms of the monitoring of the outcomes back at base, down at that frontline level, when they come back and say, “Well, no response to that. It is all quiet, to be honest”? Are we winning on that basis? Are you confident that that piece of best practice now exists across the MPS in its many forms where they may encounter these emergency calls?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Commander Mel Dales, who has spoken with Members about these issues, is the day-to-day lead on the public protection issues and she has a dashboard of KPIs to show how we are doing in response to domestic abuse. She reports in to Nick Ephgrave, who is, as you probably know, running a review of all of our public protection machinery throughout the organisation with a very clear focus on improving our detection rate in relation to domestic abuse.

I will repeat that where we do well in relation to domestic abuse is when we attend the scene and the offence is ongoing or very recent and we will deal with it. Where it becomes more difficult is in the area – and again, it is back to digital evidence – where, because we are looking at coercive and controlling behaviour or harassment or stalking, it is often done on a digital platform. It is not done person to person. That is an area of greater challenge for us because it requires more investigation. It is not an immediate investigation. It requires more follow-up from officers.

When officers attend domestic abuse incidents and there is an ongoing incident and there is clear offence, then I am very confident that in the vast majority of cases officers will take the appropriate action and there will be the right outcome as a result of that. It is the other cases where there are problems.

**Len Duvall AM:** No doubt we will return to this when we see your operational plan in terms of using all the tools available to you to battle this particularly pernicious crime within our communities.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Before we move on from this, to pick up your point, Deputy Commissioner, it did sound in your answer that you were saying, because of the definition around domestic abuse, you have dragged your heels on using the powers you have to set up a register. It cannot be beyond the wit of man to draw a level as to who would be on this register or not. Why are we having a conversation about how we cannot have this list because it will be too long? Surely we set a benchmark on whether we would be recording people or not.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I did not mean to give the impression we are dragging our heels because of that. The view of the organisation at the moment is that the idea of the domestic abuse register, whilst it sounds like a perfect solution, would be a huge volume for London and would not help us focus in on the more serious cases. Personally, if we can get to boiling down to the more serious cases to focus, I would be supportive of that, but we already prioritise. We already have, as I said, the Predatory Offenders Units, which look at the more serious cases of domestic abuse that the BCUs cannot deal with because they need more investigation or more technique than they can provide for themselves. We have an element that looks at prioritisation.

This is the point I was trying to make but I obviously did not make it effectively. If the register includes all domestic abuse cases, then it will not help us prioritise. It will detract from us prioritising, quite frankly.

**Len Duvall AM:** No one is suggesting the police do a register of every domestic violence issue. No one has said that, even in the legislation through the House of Commons. I am not understanding why the Deputy Commissioner is raising it in that way. We are not asking for that ourselves on the Assembly. No pressure groups are saying that everyone has to be on that grading. It is a question of using some of the work that the MPS has already done, such as Operation Dauntless Plus, when you targeted the most violent on your criteria. No one is suggesting all cases.

Chairman, I do have to intervene because I hear this from the Deputy Commissioner and it comes across like we will never get there, when we know that police do prioritise these issues. It needs to be in a consistent and systematic way. There has been work done by the College of Policing pointing to various tools and best practice that can bring us closer to that without having a full register. That is what the Government is suggesting in terms of its responses to others, including us, who are calling for an abusers register.

The more this carries on, the more it looks like we are going to have an abusers register. It may not be in this legislation, but it is likely to be in future legislation. It just seems to me that what we are asking for is consistency and an approach tackling the most violent and the most particularly difficult cases. It does not pick up other cases unless they reach a threshold. It is you as professionals and others involved who need to determine what that threshold looks like and the courts. No one is suggesting here that it is every one of your cases.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** I agree. The point I am trying to make, Deputy Commissioner, is that your units targeting these offenders anyway seem to have already done the work. They have a level that makes them focus on the most prolific and most violent offenders. Surely half the work has already been done. It

does not seem to me like we are asking for any particularly new innovation. We are just asking for the list because, of course, the power in a list is that it is historic. It will allow you to identify people over time who are repeat offenders and defend the public from them. I do not see why, if you are already doing the work, we cannot have the list if you do have the powers.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Sorry, we are almost furiously agreeing here. We want to prioritise and we are prioritising. That is exactly the work that [Assistant Commissioner] Nick Ephgrave is leading now to create the model that will allow us to prioritise so that our investigating officers in public protection can focus on the most serious cases.

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Could I just say that there is a slight misunderstanding? The MPS does not have the powers to set up a register in the way that a sex offenders register is there. They do not have those powers. There has been lobbying to get powers into the Domestic Abuse Bill.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** From us.

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** That was turned down by the Government. What the Deputy Commissioner is talking about is how the MPS manages the most violent offenders. The MPS does have a way of managing the most violent offenders, but what we need to make sure of and what I need to be assured of, as do you as a Committee, is how effective that is and how effective the MPS is at managing that risk. Sometimes - and this is a separate issue to the register - a low risk can escalate very quickly to a high risk, as you can see in some of the domestic homicide reviews if you look at them.

In terms of the register, there are two things. The MPS does not have the power to set that up. What we have been calling for is for the effectiveness of forces to manage the most violent offenders in relation to domestic abuse to be scrutinised and for there to be assurance and review and, if that is not effective enough in that review, for there to be a register because that is one way of ensuring that that happens.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill may well be a vehicle for that domestic abuse register and the review of it to take place, but at the moment the MPS can operationalise high-risk cases and prioritise, but it does not have the powers to set up a register in the way that a domestic abuse register is envisaged.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** I have a response to that but we are pressed for time and so we will pick this up when we do domestic violence as a separate issue. There are things they can do operationally in practice to deliver a better outcome, but I will move on to the next question.

What volume of victims and witnesses of VAWG are accessing London's Victim and Witness Service? That is to the Deputy Mayor.

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Everybody should be offered the support services of the London Victims and Witness Service. I will have to come back to you in terms of the proportion of those who take it up because they will be contacted and they will be offered it but not everybody takes that up. We also have what we call the Sexual Violence Gateway that the London Victims and Witness Service will refer victims of sexual violence to, but I do not have that in my briefing in terms of the percentage of individuals and the proportion who take it up.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Thank you. If you could write to me as the Chairman of the Committee, I will disseminate the information.



**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Yes, of course.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Thank you. This is a question for both of you. What progress has been made by the MPS and the CPS in London following the publication of the Joint National RASSO Action Plan in January 2021?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** I touched on it earlier in terms of the rape review being part of that as well. For example, one of the elements of progress from that action plan is the early investigative advice between the CPS and the MPS. That was a recommendation in Claire Waxman's rape review, which was published two years ago. It was taken into the action plan and that is now happening. That is the input.

Can we see that change in the figures at the moment? We are not at that stage yet, but there are certainly early signs that there is the right focus in terms of that action plan around the CPS and the MPS and investigation and casefile quality.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** We have taken the joint plan and we have a joint implementation plan with the CPS here in London. I am looking at it now. We have 48 actions in that implementation plan. All have owners, either the CPS or the MPS, or they are joint actions. They all have, as you would expect to see, timelines on them and they are all graded in terms of how we are doing in relation to them. You probably need somebody who is closer to the implementation plan than I am to talk through it, but I can give you assurances that we are working together on the implementation of that work through this joint plan. I can see progress being made in some of them. Other areas still look as though they are challenging. There is a determination by both agencies to work together on this to improve our detection rate in relation to these issues.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Thank you for that. We will try to get in contact with someone who is closer to that plan when we look at domestic violence and rape as well and so they can give us that. Would it be possible for you to give us your 48 points in writing or do we need to go to them?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I can certainly let you see what they are, yes. I can talk them through with you if you have the time, all 48 of them. I have them in front of me. We can certainly let you see what the plan looks like, yes.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Please do write to us because it will be the basis for the questions we ask in that session.

**Sem Moema AM:** I know we have covered some of these areas already, but I wanted to ask both of you about specific actions that you are taking to increase the number of rape and sexual assault cases going to court. I know you have talked about doing lots more - I forget the term that you used - work before getting to that point, but if you could just talk us through that, it would be really helpful.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I suppose I do not want to repeat what I have already said. We are carrying out a major review of public protection to look at the resourcing levels and make sure that they are as good as they can be. The workload on our investigators, particularly on rape and sexual offences, we know is too high, as is the workload on witness support staff as well because of the backlogs. We put more money into witness support. We put an extra £1 million into that to try to increase the numbers of officers and staff and reduce the workload so they can give better support.

We are still seeing, because of the Crown Court delays, that the number of victims in the system is growing, not reducing, which is difficult for us. We are signed up to Operation Bluestone, which will take a look at different ways of dealing with rape cases and we are working very closely with the CPS to try to improve our detection rates. I have just talked about the implementation plan that is there.

We have established the Predatory Offender Units with 108 officers across London, focusing on the more serious predatory offenders where there is too much investigation to be done, it is going to take too long or the techniques required and the tactics required are beyond the public protection teams. They will hand the more serious cases to the Predatory Offender Units. There are quite a lot of plans in action. We have Commander Mel Dales, who is very closely monitoring our performance in this area to try to improve our detection rate in relation to rape. We are working closely with the CPS to try to improve file quality and to get decisions made quicker so that we can progress things quicker.

One of the big blockages is the digital evidence and forensics that I talked about. We are still waiting for the rollout of technology that can, using artificial intelligence, help the investigator zero in on the relevant material that needs to go to the prosecution file to be passed to the defence. We are dealing with so much digital information when we download the phones that we still struggle with that. That causes a delay as well.

We are working on all these fronts to try to improve how we are providing a service to the victims and get more offenders brought to justice.

**Marina Ahmad AM:** As you both know, since 2010 there has been a 25% cut to the Ministry of Justice budget. Both the CPS and the police have highlighted this lack of resources to deal with rape cases. Are you surprised that the lack of resources was not mentioned in the review as a factor for the sharp drop-off in rape case convictions since 2016 and, therefore, would you have welcomed a greater financial package to assist with the issues?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** I am afraid that I was not surprised, unfortunately, because it was this Government that implemented the cuts and it is very difficult to then turn around and say that you had it wrong, and that you have seriously impacted people's lives and have let rape become normalised - well, not normalised but, basically, people are getting away with rape. That is a very difficult thing for anybody to admit to.

However, it is really clear that going forward, never mind looking back in terms of the cuts to CPS, cuts to the courts and cuts to the police, if there is to be a significant step change in the way in which rape is prosecuted and investigated and victims are supported, we need long-term funding. We need a step change in that funding.

The rape review that came out last week has funding for just a year for this new way in Operation Bluestone. I welcome that, however, we need it beyond a year and we also need victim services beyond a year. As the Deputy Commissioner has made clear, the police need the resources so that the caseloads of the investigating officers are not so high that they cannot undertake the investigations in the way that they wish to. It is a real burden on the police that they do not have enough officers or enough detectives in order to be able to carry out the investigations.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** In answer to that question particularly, I would limit myself to saying that, clearly, it is a criminal justice system. When any part of it is suffering through lack of resources, it will impact on the whole system and it will impact on the victims and on dealing with the offenders.

**Marina Ahmad AM:** Chairman, just on the back of something that the Deputy Mayor said, as a Committee we do need to acknowledge - and I know she corrected herself - if things are not challenged and dealt with in the courts and people are allowed to get away with things, it does become normal behaviour. Therefore, I would actually say that rape, because of the way that it is being dealt with at the moment and lack of resources being one of the big issues here, has become normalised. We really do need to note that and understand what that means.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** I want to be very clear that I do not agree. Rape has not been normalised. It is a massive issue for us, yes, as this Committee has been discussing this morning and will discuss in the future as part of our investigation into domestic violence and domestic abuse, in which rape often appears. Rape has not been normalised. That is a very sweeping statement that also has great ramifications. Do we have enough resources spent on it? We could have an argument that would probably come to the conclusion no, but we do have a Government, a Committee, a Mayor and a police service which are focused on turning around the very poor record we have dealing with rape, which would lead me not to use the word 'normalised'. That suggests that we are comfortable with the situation and I do not think any of the parties involved are comfortable with the situation.

**Nicholas Rogers AM:** How is the MPS and MOPAC working with partners such as Transport for London (TfL) and the British Transport Police to tackle and prevent sexual assaults and harassment on London's transport network?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** The Roads and Transport Policing Command has implemented a number of initiatives in relation to sexual offences and VAWG in general. What we are looking at is safe places, which are run at the main bus hubs in each borough, and we advertise those on Twitter accounts. Dedicated police officers are posted to the main transport hubs to provide reassurance, advice and support to people who are feeling vulnerable. We have looked at the shift patterns and the number of officers we have on at different times of the day and we have adjusted those as a result of the concerns that we all feel about VAWG in public spaces. That goes for roads policing networks and the Roads Policing Command as well.

We have provided a publicised dedicated space for people to go to when they felt unsafe. We have looked at putting extra patrols into transport hubs to make sure that there is a visible police presence wherever possible, either police officers or Police Community Support Officers, to make sure that the public do see police officers. We work incredibly closely with the British Transport Police and TfL, looking at where the vulnerable areas are for people to make sure that we are in the right places. The same goes for bus hubs as it does for Overground and Underground hubs as well.

**Nicholas Rogers AM:** Thank you, Deputy Commissioner. Tens of thousands of these sorts of incidents go unreported. Deputy Mayor, what are you doing to address this? How are you working with partners?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** In terms of the work that the MPS, TfL and the British Transport Police are undertaking, the biggest campaign and the most successful campaign has been the Report It to Stop It campaign, a really well researched and well evidenced campaign from TfL, supported by the MPS and supported by City Hall, to encourage those victims of sexual harassment, or what is called unwanted sexual attention. That was what the evidence showed would actually cut through to people, that they had become victims of that rather than calling it sexual harassment, which I found interesting. I queried that when we were clearing it to be launched, "Why are we not calling it sexual harassment?" It has been a well-evidenced and well-delivered campaign to encourage people to report.

You are absolutely right that there is a real issue of under-reporting. That means many women are being subject to sexual harassment that they should not be subject to. It also means that it is much harder to detect. One of the key messages of the Report It to Stop It campaign was, "Your report will help catch those sexually harassing people on the Tube because it will become part of the wider intelligence that the British Transport Police, TfL and the MPS can use".

**Nicholas Rogers AM:** The Report It to Stop It campaign has been going for a few years now, has it not?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Yes, it has.

**Nicholas Rogers AM:** Despite that - and I am sure it was a very well put together and very well researched campaign - there is still massive under-reporting. Only 2% of people, in one study, who have experienced this kind of harassment are reporting. Is there current work or planned work looking into why there is this reluctance to report?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Yes, of course. You are right. We still have a problem with under-reporting, although we have seen an increase in reporting as well. It has made progress, that campaign. We are discussing with TfL, the British Transport and the MPS around what is next for Report It to Stop It and how we encourage women to come forward.

Of course, it does link into all of the other discussions we have had today in terms of why you would report, one around confidence and assurance of women that something that will be done and then, secondly, what will be done, how long it will take and whether it is worth it. All these discussions link up not just in terms of how we encourage women to report and how we make that particular campaign more successful. It is about how the whole system becomes better at responding to the way in which women are being sexually harassed or abused in public spaces.

**Caroline Russell AM:** This is a change of topic. We are looking at Vision Zero roads policing. To start off with a little bit of context, the latest year for which we have data is 2019. In that year, 125 people were killed in road traffic collisions and 3,950 people were seriously injured. Serious injury is something like losing a leg or something that is a life-changing injury for a Londoner. I wanted to put that context onto these questions.

My first question is for the Deputy Commissioner. As lockdown restrictions are eased, how are you ensuring that there are sufficient resources in the MPS's Roads and Transport Policing Command to tackle any increase in road traffic collisions? We have seen a lot of extreme speeding and things reported during this lockdown period.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Yes, the figures you quoted were from 2019 and so, in terms of 2020, as you might expect, we saw a reduction. We had 94 fatalities in 2020. So far this year, up to just last week, we had 28 fatalities and a similar pattern with serious injuries as well, with a dip in 2020.

Interestingly, though, the one aspect that we are probably all aware of in relation to the COVID year in particular on the roads was a significant increase in speeding offences. The thing I would say is that we had no relaxation in terms of our traffic enforcement in the COVID year and we had no reduction to speak of in the number of officers we had focused on that.

The Roads and Transport Policing Command has over 2,000 officers and staff in its command. It is made up of about 450 traditional roads policing officer, who do patrolling and respond to incidents. It has a crime team. It

has a commercial vehicle unit. It has a reassurance and tasking team, which is made up mainly of Police Community Support Officers, who provide a highly focused presence across London. They are the people I mentioned who provide a presence in the safer hubs. It has a motorcycle team, which provides motorcycle safety advice, and a serious collision investigation unit of about 75 officers to deal with major collisions, particularly the fatalities we talk about. A big bulk of the numbers is our safer transport team, which polices the TfL network. That has just over 1,100 officers.

We have not reduced those numbers in the last few years. They remain focused on a number of issues. Vision Zero is one of them; road safety and also the use of the road network by criminals.

If I just finish by talking about what I mentioned earlier, the speeding issue really is quite stark. In terms of speeding offences, in 2019 we saw about 12,000 people prosecuted for speeding offences in London. In 2020, we saw 30,000 because, as you will remember, this was highly publicised – and we helped publicise it. Because the roads were quiet, we saw huge numbers of people using massively excessive speed across the capital and we really zeroed in on that to crack down on it, hence the increase in numbers. The numbers will come back to a norm because we have a volume of traffic returning to the roads and the speeding simply is not possible. The empty roads were too much of a temptation for many people to resist and they flagrantly broke the speeding regulations and put an awful lot of lives in danger, including their own, by doing it.

We will see a return to normality this year, but we have not taken our eye off the ball in relation to roads policing and Vision Zero at all. We are some way off it, but it is something that we are determined to move towards, working in partnership with TfL and the Mayor.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Sorry, just to seek a clarification, Deputy Commissioner, you say you saw an increase in speeding. Was there an actual increase in speed or was in the areas where you had lowered the speed limit?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** No, it was increase in speed. I get the thrust of what you are saying. It is not because of an increase in 20-mile-an-hour zones. We saw a massive increase in the number of people doing highly excessive speeds across London. It was something we had to put extra patrols into to deal with.

**Caroline Russell AM:** Yes, I was talking to road police the other day and they mentioned that you are not in the top five nationally, but you are doing a decent job on tackling speeding. They were very grateful for that because that is one of the ways that you can reduce harm and therefore reduce the likelihood of very serious collisions affecting Londoners.

Deputy Mayor, I just wanted to ask about Vision Zero and whether you are working with the Deputy Mayor for Transport as you prepare the Police and Crime Plan and how you are going to be incorporating Vision Zero or any changes in the Police and Crime Plan.

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** In terms of developing the Police and Crime Plan, we are working across City Hall and across all of our partners, but in particular around Vision Zero, it sits under the Deputy Mayor for Transport and it will continue to sit under the Deputy Mayor for Transport. I have discussions with her around that but, in terms of oversight and delivery of Vision Zero and that work with the MPS, it really is very much with TfL and the Deputy Mayor for Transport. The Police and Crime Plan may well refer to it, but there will be no changes in terms of oversight, direction and the responsibility for Vision Zero.

**Caroline Russell AM:** Thank you. The oversight of that sits with the Deputy Mayor for Transport, even the policing work on that?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** When it comes to the Roads and Transport Policing Command and that oversight in terms of delivery of Vision Zero, yes, TfL is very much the oversight body for that.

**Caroline Russell AM:** Thank you. That is very useful clarity. To the Deputy Commissioner, I am wondering about camera footage referrals. There has been some very strong work done by the Northampton Police and they have hugely increased the likelihood that people who are committing offences while driving are caught and people who are driving without due care or using their mobiles know that they are much more likely to be caught doing that. Those are very harmful activities.

Are you taking any specific action to improve awareness among Londoners of the ability to refer dashcam and headcam footage to the police?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** We have seen a significant increase in the number of referrals from dashcam footage over the last few years. It is a trend that is growing. It is one that we are happy to encourage. We see a high proportion of prosecutions when they are referred. It is a definite growth area for us. Involvement with citizens who have dashcams or indeed cyclists, which is quite frequent as well, who have cameras mounted on their helmets is something that is growing and that we are encouraging.

In 2017, there were just under 5,000 referrals around this issue. In 2020, there were 11,500. It has grown quite substantially. As I say, we see quite a high prosecution rate of that and it is something that we are happy to continue to encourage.

Use of social media has helped that, but we have also made it much easier through our technology for people to upload videos to us. They are not having to send anything through the post or anything prehistoric like that. They can upload it to our website so that we can view it directly. It is a high-profile way of reminding drivers that even if there is not a police patrol in the area and there is not a speed camera in the area, breaking the law and driving at excessive and dangerous speed or driving without consideration for other drivers or reckless driving is something that they could well be held to account for through a third-party submission.

Approximately two thirds of the submissions that we get – and as I said, in 2020 that was 11,500 – result in prosecution. A high rate of prosecution is taking place as a result of citizen reporting.

**Caroline Russell AM:** Thank you. That is really useful to know. Is this data published anywhere? You mentioned the numbers of submissions and you said two thirds of the submissions result in prosecution. I just wondered if that data is published.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I do not know the answer to that but I see no reason why it should not be. It should be publicised. I am grateful to you for asking the question, quite frankly. We can take steps to make sure that it is publicised. In fact, it probably has been already, but we can repeat that.

**Caroline Russell AM:** That would be extremely helpful. My final question area is about e-scooters. Clearly, e-scooters used on the pavement are wrong. They are illegal. They desperately need to be speed-limited and

regulated. Hopefully, the current trial is going to lead to some sensible regulation of these things, which exist and have been invented.

Now, my questions are about the way that their use is being policed. There is the trial and the trial e-scooters are the legal ones which are allowed to be used. Anyone who is using a personally-owned e-scooter is currently engaged in an illegal activity. What people are concerned about is the difference in approach to policing e-scooter use to policing people driving cars and committing activity that is as harmful to other citizens. Apparently 800 e-scooters have been confiscated this year and they have also been described by one of your colleagues [Chief Superintendent Simon Ovens, MPS] as a 'death trap' in the *Evening Standard*.

I am just wondering whether you have data showing that e-scooters are more harmful than cars in collisions with pedestrians and people riding bikes and also the rate of confiscation of property from people committing serious harm with a car or other vehicle and whether you are confiscating vehicles in the way you are confiscating e-scooters.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I would start off by replying to the question by saying that part of the answer is in your question. Unless you are using an e-scooter on private premises or as part of the pilot, it is unlawful. The same is not true of vehicles, of cars. It is not a relatively fair comparison, if I am honest with you. If you are using an e-scooter on a public road and you are not taking part in the pilot with a properly designed e-scooter, you are breaking the law anyway. If you are using a car, then you have to commit an offence in relation to driving or documentation before we can take any action against you. The simple fact that you are riding an e-scooter on a public road and you are in the pilot area means that actually the use is unlawful because it is a motor vehicle and you are not insured.

**Caroline Russell AM:** Yes, I opened my questions by confirming that I understand the use of e-scooters is unlawful.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I get that, but I was just saying that the comparison is difficult.

**Caroline Russell AM:** The comparison is to people who are committing offences in their use of vehicles. There are people who break speed limits. There are people who drive uninsured vehicles. What is being commented on by some Londoners is the understandable approach to policing e-scooters but do we need to be a bit more serious about some of the policing of the offences by people driving vehicles which cause harm?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** In 2021, we proceeded against 23,500 drivers for insurance offences. In 2020, we revoked 1,500 driving licences. I would not want anyone to imagine we do not take action against drivers who are driving either unlawfully or dangerously because we do. In fact, that is effectively what the Roads Policing Command looks to do. It is their meat and drink, as it were. You are quite correct. Your figures are understandably slightly out of date because we had a week of action on e-scooters last week and in that week alone we seized 500. The numbers are well over the number that you were quoting in terms of e-scooters.

We are here to enforce legislation to try to keep the roads as safe as possible. We are seeing people injured. There were 68 people seriously injured in 2020 with e-scooters. Not in London this year or last year - we did not have a fatality - but in 2019 we think we may have done. Certainly there was a famous case in the West Midlands where somebody has been killed as a result of an e-scooter collision. Their unlawful use is dangerous and we will continue to seize them where they are unlawful, as we will seize cars that are used unlawfully and in

crime and when drivers are breaking the law in a serious way. Otherwise, we will take action against them through the courts for no insurance, no MOT, no driving licence or speeding.

**Caroline Russell AM:** Yes. The other thing, though, is that these e-scooter riders are having their property seized and also there is one here being quoted as having six points on his driving licence.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** It is unlawful and so he should not be doing it.

**Caroline Russell AM:** Absolutely, I agree, but there is a perception that the number of points that people driving get are much lower than for people who are using e-scooters. The e-scooters, yes, are causing harm but it is a fraction of the 3,950 serious injuries in that year, 2019.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I agree with that. It is a fraction. Just for clarity, we do not award points; the courts do that. If there a conception of a disparity in penalisation, then that is possibly for another part of the criminal justice system as well as us.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** Deputy Mayor and Deputy Commissioner, I have some questions to ask you about hate crime. My first question is to both of you.

Last year, last summer specifically when lockdown restrictions were lifted, we saw an increase in hate crime in London. What work are you doing to ensure that the same pattern does not again emerge this summer? Very specifically, what lessons did you learn from last year to better inform your approach to tackling hate crime, particularly in the areas of community cohesion and encouraging more reporting?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** You are absolutely right in terms of the incidents of hate crime last year. We have seen a rise particularly in antisemitism. It is not always connected with lockdown easing. It is also connected with geopolitical events like the tensions in the Middle East, as we have already discussed this morning anyway around protests. In terms of hate crime, unfortunately we really have seen an increase. The Community Security Trust (CST) has reported a huge increase in the number of incidents that are reported to them. In May there were 350 incidents reported to them, a massive step up in antisemitism.

The Deputy Commissioner will be able to talk in terms of the MPS's operational response, but in City Hall we have a very good network of community organisations and very good outreach and engagement with them. For example, I have met with community leaders from the Jewish community, as has the Deputy Mayor [for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, Debbie Weekes-Bernard], and we will continue to do that. MOPAC and other parts of City Hall, for example, have regular engagement with the CST and it was small amounts of money but we have funded it as well and continue to fund it.

One of the key issues is the reporting of hate crime. Whilst we have seen incidents go up, it is like under-reporting of sexual harassment. We know that it is very seriously under-reported. The Crime Survey for England and Wales, for example, estimates that incidents of hate crime are about 50% under-reported. Again, it is about that assurance, that engagement and that communication for people not to put up with hate crime and not to put up with the abuse that they are experiencing but to report it. If they do not feel assured enough to report it straight to the MPS, there are third-party mechanisms to do so like Tell MAMA and other organisations as well. We are reaching out and communicating that. The Mayor has also, for example, invested in the Shared Endeavour Fund, which has funded 30 grassroots organisations working in the community to



tackle hate. We are working when hate does happen but also working very hard in terms of community cohesion, education for young people and online as well to try to prevent hate arising in the first place.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** At the strategic level, we have established a pan-London hate crime board for the first time. It is chaired by a Commander. MOPAC sits on that and so does the Home Office. We have chief executive representation on that group from various community and faith groups across London.

As you will well know, we have a large number of community forums and Independent Advisory Groups across the city and we have been working with them in terms of education on the different ways of reporting hate crimes to the police or using third-party methods of reporting. We have also raised awareness of hate crime via the MPS social media platforms so that people are more confident to report and also so that people understand - and I do not mean to sound inappropriate - what a hate crime is, which hopefully will try to restrain some people's behaviour at various events.

We work in collaboration with a number of third-party reporting organisations. The Deputy Mayor has mentioned Tell MAMA. We have Protection Approaches. We work with the CST, the London Jewish Forum, Sikh community groups and black community groups around this. We have run webinars with different groups, particularly the Chinese and Southeast Asian communities, about the impact of hate crime, to understand from them the impact and to alert them to third-party reporting and the ways of contacting the police to report it.

We always, as you know, put out extra reassurance patrols around particular religious festivals because we know that that can attract the attention of undesirable groups. We have issued awareness training to all of our officers on antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime in recent months as a result of the tensions in the Middle East. We have reinforced the need for our local intelligence teams to do scanning every day in relation to any local tensions and make sure that is briefed out to operational officers. All of our call handlers have been trained specifically in how to identify and support hate crime victims when they contact us and this training will be extended in due course to Dedicated Ward Officers and other colleagues on BCUs. There are a number of other initiatives. I am just trying to pick out the more important ones.

We work very closely with the CST, the London Jewish Forum and Shomrim as a result of the tensions, particularly in those areas with high levels of Jewish citizens living in them. We worked very closely with them in the run-up to the various pro-Palestinian demonstrations. Although we saw the very highly publicised and completely unacceptable behaviour by people in vehicles, they were identified not retrospectively, but on the day. Four people were arrested as a result of that and are going through the criminal justice system. We have also worked very closely to try to chase down people who we have on video who have committed offences during the various demonstrations and are working closely with the CPS and their special lawyers to identify the offences and the offenders. We are using our resources to continue that work.

Internally, we work closely with our various staff support associations for Muslim officers, Jewish officers, Sikh and black officers around hate crime and to focus on their welfare because often some of these figures and some of these increases in hate crimes are reflective of the abuse that our officers and staff are getting at various demonstrations or on operational duties elsewhere. We work very closely with them to support them.

As you will know, we have extended Operation Hampshire, which is the operation we have to support officers who are assaulted on duty. We have extended that to officers who are victims of racial or hate abuse on duty as well. They come within that and they get all the support of Operation Hampshire to take that through the criminal justice system to make sure that the offenders get the appropriate punishment.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** Thank you for that detailed answer, Deputy Commissioner. I was going to ask both of you questions about hate crime against our East and Southeast Asian communities and against Jewish Londoners, but you have covered those two areas.

In terms of antisemitism, Deputy Commissioner, I know what the answer is, but you have high-visibility patrols in certain areas. Are they having an impact? Clearly, they are reassuring.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** We believe they have. I suppose I did not finish my comment about that. We saw the high-profile, unacceptable and unlawful behaviour by some of the people involved in those demonstrations, which we tackled on the day. We are following others up. What we did not see because it did not happen was a number of the drive-outs from various parts of the United Kingdom coming down to London were intercepted by the MPS, roads policing officers in the main, and we made sure that those convoys of vehicles, which were not initially unlawful in themselves, did not go near any Jewish areas. When the demonstrators get in touch with us and tell us they are going to do a convoy from Birmingham, Bradford or somewhere into London, we agree the route with them to keep them out of Jewish areas. Most of the organisers co-operated with us and we are grateful for that. Where we had impromptu convoys of vehicles waving Palestinian flags and causing undoubted distress in Jewish communities, we responded very quickly and arrests were made. There are at least two examples I know of where arrests were made very quickly of people who were breaking the law in relation to racial and religious abuse of Jewish communities. I am very confident that when we know about it, we stop it and, when we find out about it because we are not told by the organisers, we respond very effectively locally. The local officers are very sensitive to the needs of different communities, not just the Jewish community but lots of communities around London.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** Again, that is very reassuring. Deputy Mayor, you will be aware that recently the Assembly passed a motion proposed by Assembly Member Susan Hall calling on the Mayor and the MPS to publish a specific strategy to tackle antisemitism in London. Will you commit to developing this strategy?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** Certainly in terms of tackling antisemitism, through the Police and Crime Plan, we will continue to have a focus on hate crime and will look at what more needs to be done and what additionality there should be to make sure that we tackle antisemitism and all hate crime.

There is absolutely no equivocation on the need to tackle antisemitism. My question is: what is the best way of ensuring that our capacity is focused on that delivery of tackling hate crime and antisemitism and the best way of doing that?

**Unmesh Desai AM:** I will leave it at that. Perhaps Assembly Member Hall can expand on the motive and the reasoning behind her motion, but the Assembly passed it. There was an amendment, but it was about a specific strategy to tackle antisemitism in London.

Deputy Commissioner, we had a briefing from Commander Jane Connors on policing in the lead-up to Euro 2020 and during Euro 2020, but I have to ask you this question for the benefit of Londoners out there. We are now entering the quarter finals, and I understand that the MPS has “a great many specialist units to prevent crime and disorder” during Euro 2020 with a “particular focus” on “tackling domestic abuse, violence against women and girls and hate crime”. Could you tell us a bit more about the work of these specialist units over the last few days and the next two to three weeks?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** We have focused on areas where we know that there will be mixing of various fan groups in and around London, the examples being Hyde Park, Leicester Square, and the fan zones in Trafalgar Square and near City Hall as well. We have put extra patrols into those areas. All of our officers are briefed before the various matches to remind them that if they are present and they see any discriminatory behaviour, they must take action. I go back to my comments earlier in the session. Officers are reminded of the need to be impartial at events but to act when they see the law being broken. They are expected to take positive action if they see hate crime or hear hate crime taking place.

We work very closely with The Royal Parks, with the European Football Association (UEFA) and Wembley Stadium to support and advise staff around them so that if they identify any worrying behaviour in relation to hate crime, we can deal with that quickly. We work with the Greater London Authority (GLA) around the fan zone and establish protocols and messaging about zero tolerance, which are flashed up on the screens. We have also spoken with the football stewards so that they have been briefed and can act with us in partnership to try to deal with these events either before they take place if it looks like there is going to be trouble, or immediately afterwards.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** Thank you. Deputy Mayor, I have a couple of questions about this Committee's 2019 report and investigation into hate crime. Our 2019 report recommended that MOPAC conducts an in-depth analysis to find out whether the increase in recorded hate crime in recent years was due to an increase in confidence to report or whether there was an actual increase in incidents taking place. Have you now conducted this work and are you able to offer your thoughts on this?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** We have not, no. We have not yet done that work because of the workload and the timings of it, but it is certainly something we will look at.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** Fine, if you can keep it on the agenda. Another question, Deputy Mayor. As we know, those who commit hate crimes are more likely to go on to commit more serious crimes. Again, in response to our report in 2019, you said you would be reviewing the work that was in place to deal with hate crime offenders in London. Can you say whether this has taken place and are you now satisfied that there are adequate schemes in place to deal with and rehabilitate hate crime offenders?

**Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime):** It is part of the issue around detections and prosecutions and that is certainly something that we have been looking at. It is part of the programmes of the Shared Endeavour Fund, working with communities and working with offenders and working with victims to make sure that we can find the best ways. I do not have it in front of me in terms of where that has got to and what the evidence is on that. I would have to get back to you.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** Thank you. Turning to you, Deputy Commissioner, in March this year [2021], Home Office Minister Baroness Williams said that the Government would be asking police forces to record and identify any crimes motivated by hostility based on sex on an experimental basis. The Mayor has said he supports the introduction of recording gender-based hate crime and gave his support for this within his election manifesto. The Commissioner – and I asked her this question in September 2016 – said she was extremely sceptical about the recording of gender-based hate crime. Presumably, she has now changed her thinking or has had to change her thinking in light of the Mayor's election manifesto. Are you supportive of trialling the introduction of gender-based hate crime recording in London?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** You are correct in your summary of the Commissioner's position and I do not believe that it has changed. It is important to point out

that simply because something appears in the Mayor's manifesto does not mean that it will translate into operational policing matters. The Mayor sets strategy for us but he does not decide operational matters. That is for the Commissioner to do. She has made her position pretty clear on this so far.

We are awaiting further guidance or instruction from the Home Office in relation to Baroness Williams's commentary because we were not aware that it was going to happen and therefore we need to understand exactly what the Government has in mind.

Our position on it, of course, is that we have a strong belief – and I have to say that I do not want this to appear to be just the Commissioner's view. Assistant Commissioner Louisa Rolfe, who is the national lead for policing on domestic abuse, also needs to be convinced on this and does not believe it is necessarily the right step. With those two powerful women having those views – and they are very well informed – the MPS is still waiting to understand what the proposals are before we respond in any way to those exact proposals.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** I am not really sure what to make of that answer, Deputy Commissioner. Seven police forces in England have now introduced policies to begin recording gender-based hate crime. Nottinghamshire piloted this scheme in 2016 and that is why I raised it at this Committee in September 2016. I read an article in *The Times* about this. In various questions to the Deputy Mayor, I was informed that the MPS was evaluating the pilots. That has been the case for the last two to three years and you are still evaluating these pilots over such a long period of time? From what I understand, the Home Office Minister was very clear in what she was asking forces to do. I am not even sure whether this is an operational matter.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** It was not that clear. That is why we are waiting for extra guidance. Yes, we understand that other forces have done it, but individual Chief Constables will make their own minds up about this. The Commissioner has a view on it, which I share, which is that we do not believe that it will add that much to our ability to identify and bring to justice people who are haters of women. We think that the vast majority of the examples that are quoted to us are already substantive offences on the statute book and could be dealt with without further legislation being added to the statute book.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** OK. I will leave it there. The charity Hope Not Hate, one of the leading campaigners in the field of monitoring hate crime, had this to say in its *State of Hate 2021* report, which came out in March this year [2021], "COVID-19 has quickened the demise of many traditional far-right groups while younger, more tech-savvy activists have thrived" with "more fluid online" activities. Deputy Commissioner, how do you monitor these online merchants of hate?

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** I would agree with that estimate in general. From speaking to my colleague Neil Basu [QPM], who leads on counterterrorism, we have seen a worrying trend where extremist views are being held by younger and younger people. Often, as you have identified and indicated, because they are more used to it, that translates to online activity, which then can translate into real-world activity, quite obviously. We do monitor it when it is brought to our attention and that is why we are working very hard through our strategic partnership to let people know that they can report this to us. We have translated hate crime literature into several languages so that wider communities understand what hate crime is and how to report it to us. We have doubled victim referrals to hate crime charities in recent months because we want to make sure that people get support.

Where we are aware of it, we will look online. I would urge anyone who feels they are a victim or are being subjected to hate crime online to get in touch with us and we will deal with that appropriately. We do not monitor all channels all the time. We do not have the legislation or the resources to do that. Much of this is

up to the providers of platforms if they identify it to block it and to report it to us or, if people feel victimised by it, to report it to us and we will deal with it.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** This is actually the problem. You have identified this, Deputy Commissioner. Many of these sites are based in the United States (US) of America and there are legal issues and jurisdictional issues.

**Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):** Yes, I understand that. It is a much more complex situation than somebody walking down the high street and abusing somebody in the real world. It makes it much more complex for us.

Again, I go back to providers and the social responsibility of providers. Most of the providers of platforms are US-based and I know the British Government – and I have heard the Home Secretary talk about it – is keen to make the moral responsibility and the social responsibility more real for platform providers. That is something we would absolutely echo.

We do work with them closely. Again, I know this from Neil Basu's work. The providers are better at closing sites down quicker, but we need to think about moving that from the terrorism and the extremist world probably more into hate crime issues as well. The internet and social platforms should not be safe spaces in any shape or form for hate crime and those sorts of opinions.

**Shaun Bailey AM (Chairman):** Thank you. That brings us to the end of our question-and-answer session. I would like to thank our guests for their attendance and their diligent answering of all of these very complex questions. Thank you very much.