

LONDON ASSEMBLY

Work of the Police and Crime Committee in 2018-19



November 2019

Holding the Mayor to
account and investigating
issues that matter to
Londoners

LONDONASSEMBLY

The London Assembly

The London Assembly is a crucial check on the powers of the Mayor of London. As the most powerful directly-elected politician in the UK, it is important the Mayor is held publicly and democratically accountable.

The Assembly examines the decisions and actions of the Mayor to ensure promises to Londoners are delivered and the money he spends, collected from Londoners, is wisely spent.

The 25 London **Assembly Members** are elected every four years at the same time as the Mayor of London. The Assembly holds the Mayor and Mayoral advisers to account by publicly examining policies and programmes. In addition, the Assembly questions the Mayor ten times a year at Mayor's Question Time.

Assembly meetings are open to the public, so Londoners can stay informed about the activities of the Mayor and the Assembly can publicly review their performance.

As well as examining the Mayor's actions and decisions, Assembly Members act as champions for Londoners by investigating issues that are important to the capital. The Assembly can press for changes to national, mayoral or local policy.

Assembly achievements

- Recommended cutting the use of single use packaging in the '*Bottled water*' report and the Mayor has committed to supporting that, as well as to work to reduce the use of single-use plastic bottles, through installing water fountains.
- Questioned the Mayor, the Transport for London Commissioner and the former Chair of Crossrail about the delay to the project to find out who was to blame, having summonsed correspondence and reports that had not been available to the public.
- Following the report on healthcare in police custody, which called for a reduction in the number of children and young people detained in custody, a pan-London protocol for the detention of children is being developed.
- Commissioned a survey into attitudes towards organ donation among BAME communities in London, raising awareness of this critical issue in an open mic forum and at a gala event for organ donors and their families.
- Uncovered just how much the London Stadium and West Ham had spent fighting each other in court (£4 million) and had both sides before the Assembly to present their case.

- Called for an investigation into the Met Police role in the Tower Hamlets electoral fraud investigation. In March this year, the final report from the police inspectorate was published, identifying lessons learned and best practice for the future.
- The Mayor's winter rough sleeping campaign addressed the recommendations in the Assembly's report '*Hidden homelessness in London*': 'to promote the use of existing homelessness advice and support services using [London.gov.uk](https://www.london.gov.uk) website and TfL advertising space'.
- Broke the news about how much the Crossrail delay was going to cost TfL in lost passenger income (£200 million).
- In the '*Unflushables*' report the Assembly said, 'make labelling on wet wipes products consistent, clear and easy to understand'. Water UK has since unveiled the new quality mark 'Fine to Flush'.
- Published the '*Affordable Housing Monitor*' which reported that less than 5,500 new homes were delivered through Mayoral funding in 2017-18, but that 12,555 were started on site.
- Campaigned for more female Blue Plaques and asked Londoners to suggest names. 250 suggestions were sent to English Heritage and it has agreed to consider a plaque for Diana, Princess of Wales.

- Investigation into the Garden Bridge Project led to TfL revealing that the failed initiative cost taxpayers £43 million.
- Following the investigation into the precarious situation of property guardians, government guidance is now under review. As property guardians are not currently defined in law, the Government is also considering how to ensure that they “have a bedrock of rights in all situations.”.
- Set up the first ever London Youth Assembly to bring together representatives from different youth forums across London to create positive change for young people.

The Police and Crime Committee

The **London Assembly Police and Crime Committee** is a cross-party body. In 2018-19 it was chaired by Conservative Assembly Member Steve O’Connell.

We examine the work of the Mayor and his Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), to make sure that he is delivering on the promises made to Londoners in his Police and Crime Plan. We also investigate other issues relating to policing and crime in the capital.

Our work involves a range of activities, including meetings with MOPAC, the Metropolitan Police and other organisations; site visits; written consultations; and roundtable meetings.

We hold a Question and Answer (Q&A) session in public every month with a representative from MOPAC—normally the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime—and a representative from the Metropolitan Police on current issues, to find out what they are doing to keep Londoners safe. We also carry out in-depth investigations into different topics, such as violence, healthcare in police custody and women offenders.

We routinely publish the findings and recommendations of our investigations, including the responses we receive from the Mayor. These can be found on our [investigations page](#).

Your Police and Crime Committee Members this year were



**Steve O'Connell
AM (Chairman
2018-19)
Conservative**



**Len Duvall AM
Labour**



**Sian Berry AM
Green**



**Florence
Eshalomi AM
Labour**



**Tony Arbour AM
Conservative**



**Susan Hall AM
Conservative**



**Unmesh Desai
AM (Deputy Chair
2018-19)
Labour**



**Caroline Pidgeon
MBE AM
Liberal Democrat**



**Andrew Dismore
AM
Labour**



**Peter Whittle AM
Brexit Alliance
Group**

Steve O'Connell AM

Chairman of the Police and Crime Committee 2018-19



This year, my final as Chairman of the Police and Crime Committee, has been dominated by the issue of violent crime. It cannot be right that in 2018-19 we lost over 100 people to violent acts, in addition to the many victims of violence left with life-changing physical and mental injuries.

Our work aimed to ensure that the Mayor, as Police and Crime Commissioner for London, is tackling all forms of violence—from youth violence to domestic abuse— from all angles, including short-term efforts to stop the immediate increase and the longer-term solutions that can prevent violence from happening in the first place.

While the headlines continue to be of great concern, we are encouraged by the commitment of not only the police, but of the grassroots organisations, young people, communities and public services determined to make sure that the risk of violence on our streets and in our homes is reduced. The recommendations we made to the Mayor in December 2018 aim to galvanise on this commitment, so that we can make a real difference to the lives of Londoners.

As well as focusing on violent crime, we have looked at the other issues of concern to Londoners. This includes how

women offenders are dealt with by the criminal justice system; how the Met ensures the health and safety of people in police custody; and, critically, how Londoners can better engage with the police to build trust, confidence, and ensure that officers are best representing the people they are there to serve.

I would like to thank everyone that has been involved in the committee's work for their support and contributions during my tenure as Chair. It has been a privilege to lead this committee and I wish the new Chair the best as he continues the good work that its members carry out in holding the Mayor to account.

What we have done this year

Tackling violent crime

- In April 2018, following a sharp rise in the number of murders and knife crime offences, the decision was taken to hold an urgent meeting with the Mayor and MOPAC to establish how the rise in violence was being addressed by City Hall. We then agreed to carry out a piece of work to examine what more the Mayor could do to help tackle the rise in violent crime, both in the short and longer term. In December 2018, we wrote to the Mayor setting out our findings on the causes of violence and the development of a London Violence Reduction Unit as a way of preventing violence.

Women offenders

- In July 2018, we released our report *A long way from home: improving London's response to women in the criminal justice system*. This followed an investigation into the impact of the closure of HMP Holloway and the provision of specialist support services for women offenders across London.

Healthcare in police custody

- We published *Detained, not forgotten: healthcare in police custody* in September 2018. The investigation examined how the Met ensures the health and safety of people in police custody.
- We found that a lack of secure accommodation for children in London often means there is no option but to

keep a child in a police cell, sometimes for periods overnight. We also crucially found that vulnerable adults held in custody, including, for example, those with mental health problems, could be left at risk because no-one has the responsibility to provide them with an Appropriate Adult. We set MOPAC a series of deadlines to work with partners to resolve these issues.

The voice of victims

- In October 2018, the Victims' Commissioner for London, Claire Waxman, appeared in front of the committee to answer questions on representing the voice of victims, especially under-represented groups, and how changes to the Met might be affecting the experience victims have of the police.

Mental health and policing

- We examined the ways in which the Met supports its officers to respond to people with mental health needs. The role of MOPAC in supporting the Met's efforts to meet increasing mental health demand and holding the Met to account for its performance was also examined. We heard from a number of organisations, including Lord Victor Adebawale CBE, who in 2014 published a report calling for organisational change to better equip officers in relation to mental health needs.
- We set out our findings and made recommendations in a letter to the Mayor to ensure the public that all necessary steps are taken to ensure that the Met adopts best practice in its response to increasing mental health demand. This included that:

- every officer is well trained to identify and attend to mental health needs
- every officer is able to refer promptly to appropriate mental health services
- there is effective monitoring of the impact of the Met's response to mental health

Reducing burglary, theft and robbery

- Seven types of crimes, including burglary, robbery and theft, make up close to half of all crimes recorded by the Met. The Mayor's Police and Crime Plan put in place a system of 'borough priorities' to tackle these types of crimes, in which every borough picks two crimes from the seven and focusses efforts on tackling them.
- This year we looked at the impact of choosing the priorities on crime levels, the police and victims. This included a visit to Tower Hamlets to meet with the Safer Neighbourhood Boards (SNBs), Ward Panel and Victim Support representatives.
- We also sought the views of other SNBs and Ward Panel representatives to find out how well understood the priority setting process is; and discussed the difference borough priorities can make with the Met and MOPAC.

Police-community engagement

- We examined the way in which the public can engage with the police – through SNBs and Ward Panels. We

met with a group of SNB and Ward Panel Chairs to hear about their work and the support provided to them by MOPAC and the Met. Issues such as public involvement in local community activity, funding for local crime prevention projects and the impact of ward panels on how local officers tackle local problems were raised.



The committee met with Safer Neighbourhood Board, Ward Panel and Met representatives – November 2018

A focus on violent crime

The committee focussed much of its work in 2018-19 on tackling violent crime.



Chairman Steve O'Connell AM speaks to London Youth on the committee's work on violence – October 2018

Following our meeting with the Mayor and MOPAC in April 2018, we undertook a range of activity to keep up the pressure on MOPAC and the Met to make the city safer regarding violent crime. This included a visit to the Met's Violent Crime Taskforce, meetings with community and voluntary organisations and regular questioning of the Met and MOPAC through Q&A meetings. We focussed on direct engagement with Londoners and held a round table with young people in July, facilitated by Hackney CVS, and an open mic debate in September with community organisations, young people, offenders and victims of violence.

We wrote to the Mayor in December 2018 setting out our findings on the causes of violence and the guiding principles that we believe are needed to shape the Mayor's Violence Reduction Unit.

We set out several principles for the development of the Unit, including that it focuses on all types of violence and that delivery is locally led. We also made recommendations for the activity of the Unit, including a focus on school exclusions and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); and enabling the use of mediation services at a local level to prevent the escalation of violence.

In his response to our letter, the Mayor expressed his shared concern about the increase in violence in London. He said that "the London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) cannot only be doing more of the same. It must be about making changes at the community, local, regional, and structural level to embed the public health approach which I established in my Knife Crime Strategy across the capital."

The Mayor confirmed that the VRU will focus on ACEs and will take into consideration the points made by the committee, such as the teaching of critical thinking skills in schools, and local mediation services.

We examined tackling violence further with a meeting in January 2019 on Stop and Search. This included a discussion on the use of Section 60 Stop and Search. Members heard from young people and community organisations about their

experiences of Stop and Search and how they would like to see the tactic improved, with a key focus on improving trust and engagement between young people and the police.

Detained, not forgotten – healthcare in police custody



In September 2018, we published the committee’s work on the development of healthcare in police custody suites, *Detained, not forgotten*.

During the investigation we brought together doctors, nurses, police officers and volunteers working in custody to hear about the challenges in delivering effective healthcare for often very vulnerable people detained in police cells.

We found:

- The number of people being taken into police custody has fallen in recent years. In 2017-18, around 161,000 people were detained in custody. When we last investigated this issue the number stood at nearly 250,000 a year.

- But the demand for healthcare services in custody is not falling in line with this reduction. In fact, the proportion of detainees being examined by a healthcare professional is increasing.
- Progress has been made in the recruitment of healthcare professionals in custody. But even with a smaller number of custody suites to cover, many are still stretched.
- A lack of secure accommodation for children in London often means there is no option but to keep a child in a police cell, sometimes for periods overnight.
- Vulnerable adults held in custody—including, for example, those with mental health problems—could be left at risk because no-one has responsibility to provide them with an Appropriate Adult.

Following these findings we urged the Met to develop a better understanding of the current pressures on healthcare provision in custody, and recommended MOPAC take a much stronger lead to ensure that children and vulnerable adults in custody have their needs met consistently.

In its response to our report, the Met recognised concerns with the rising demand for healthcare in the custody environment and the steps it is taking to enhance detainee safety further. The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime welcomed the report and noted that the recommendations were largely in line with MOPAC's direction of travel, stressing the focus on effective police custody within the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan.

A long way from home

In July 2018, we published our report on women in the criminal justice system, *A long way from home – improving London’s response to women in the criminal justice system*.

With the closure of HMP Holloway in 2016, women from London who are sent to jail must serve their time in prisons outside the capital. This hampers their chances of successful rehabilitation and reintegration in society once they are released. Our investigation examined the extent to which the closure of HMP Holloway has affected the rehabilitation of London’s women in prison and the provision of specialist support services for women offenders, in particular women’s centres, across London. We also assessed the effectiveness of MOPAC’s proposals to support the rehabilitation of women offenders through a Female Offender Service.

We found that women are mostly involved in crimes like theft and common assault, often driven by factors like drug and alcohol addictions, coercive relationships and financial difficulties. It is disappointing that over ten years on from a major report by Baroness Corston, which highlighted these very issues and called for radical change, including a reduction in the use of prison for women, progress has been so limited.

Our report called for a London-wide service that delivers access to quality specialist services for all women and ensures the best possible outcomes at each stage of the criminal justice system, wherever in the capital they may

live. We called on the Mayor to adopt a set of objectives that demonstrate the capital is taking the steps needed to deliver change, and to work with the Government to deliver the resources that London needs.

The Met welcomed the report’s findings and acknowledged that there is “still pressing work to do”. The Mayor’s response thanked the committee for “compiling and producing what is a very substantial examination of provision for female offenders in London” but was less clear as to whether he would adopt the objectives suggested.



The committee heard from organisations involved in providing services for women in the criminal justice system

Question and Answer sessions

Ten times a year a representative from MOPAC, normally the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, and a representative from the Met, appear in front of the committee to answer questions on a wide range of current issues. This is a vital way of holding the Mayor accountable for his actions.



The committee questions the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the Metropolitan Police ten times a year

This year, we discussed over 40 different topics at Q&A meetings. These are just some examples:

- Tackling violence
- EU exit
- The Grenfell Tower fire

- Police station closures
- Domestic abuse
- Stop and Search
- Emergency response times and calls to 999 and 101
- Child protection
- Spit guards
- Sanction detection rates
- We heard from the Met Commissioner in July and November 2018. We questioned her on a range of topical issues, including tackling violent crime, Basic Command Units, Stop and Search, EU Exit, road crime, 999 response times, sanction detection rates, facial recognition technology, counter terrorism, inclusion and diversity.

Visits and other meetings

- We visited the Met's training centre in Hendon in April 2018, following the redevelopment of the estate as part of the Met and MOPAC's estates strategy in 2016.
- In April 2018, we visited the Met's specialist training centre in Gravesend to gain insight into the public order challenges faced by the Met and its training and response.
- In May 2018, we called on HMICFRS to tell us about Operation Lynemouth and child protection.
- In June 2018, we visited the Met's Command and Control Centre in Lambeth.
- In July 2018, the Met updated us on BCU performance monitoring and preparations for the Notting Hill Carnival.
- In September 2018, we went to Birmingham as part of our investigation on tackling violent crime.
- In October 2018, we received an informal briefing on preventing extremism from the Home Office and MOPAC.
- In November 2018, following the publication of our report on healthcare in custody, the Met briefed the committee on its Target Operating Model for the provision of healthcare in custody. We also met with the

National Appropriate Adult Network to support our work in this area.

- In March 2019, we visited the Met's Mounted Branch Unit. The Met's Mounted Branch is one of the oldest Units in the Met. The Unit is situated in stables across the capital, including Lewisham, West Hampstead, Bow, Kings Cross and Hyde Park.



The committee visited Lambeth's Mounted Branch – March 2019

Our work for 2019-20

This year we are continuing to hold the Mayor to account for his commitments in the Police and Crime Plan and examining the issues that matter to Londoners.

We will hold investigations into topics such as **violence, hate crime, sexual offences and rape, modern day slavery, domestic abuse and how MOPAC commissions its services aimed at reducing crime and disorder.**

We will also continue our regular examination of MOPAC and the Met through our monthly Q&A meetings, looking at topics such as **changes to front line policing, police funding and crime prevention.**



Unmesh Desai, Chair of Police and Crime Committee 2019-20

Unmesh Desai AM

Chair of the Police and Crime Committee 2019-20



This year will be my first as Chair of the Police and Crime Committee and I look forward to, along with my fellow committee members, scrutinising the Mayor and Met's work in keeping Londoners safe.

We will undoubtedly have a busy year ahead, with tackling violent crime set to continue to be a top priority. Through the committee's Q&A sessions we will be closely inspecting the Mayor's work in this area.

We will also be investigating a number of topics in depth, in an effort to improve the way the Mayor and Met approach particular problems. Domestic abuse continues to account for a significant proportion of crime in the capital and we will be hearing from Domestic Abuse Services and victims as part of our investigation into this issue.

As a lifelong anti-racism campaigner, hate crime is an area I am glad the committee will be investigating and making recommendations to the Mayor on. We will also be scrutinising the work being done to tackle rape and sexual offences, including the need to work with partners in the criminal justice system to increase the number of these types of crimes being solved.

The Met's officers on our streets continue to do a commendable job, often putting themselves at risk in order to keep Londoners safe. However, our police service has for many years been under significant strain due to funding pressures. As Chair I will ensure that the resulting issues this has caused for the service are also fully investigated over the forthcoming year.

I would like to encourage readers to get in touch with the committee with their thoughts and views on our investigations. Whilst the committee does not investigate individual cases or complaints, we do welcome input to help us identify the strategic issues facing London as they enable us to better undertake our role in scrutinising those responsible for keeping London safe.

Along with the other committee members, I look forward to continuing to work with you and on your behalf over the coming year. Thank you.

Elsewhere in the London Assembly

From time to time other Assembly committees will examine issues related to policing and crime. This year, the **Budget and Performance Committee** published *'Police funding – who's paying the Bill?'* following a major investigation into the finances of the Metropolitan Police. The committee heard about a Met under severe pressure and highlighted the Mayor's powers to divert funding from other areas of the GLA Group towards the police service.

The Assembly has also agreed statements put forward by individual Assembly members which relate to policing and crime. This includes:

Spit Guards

The Assembly called on the Mayor to support the Met Commissioner in piloting and consulting communities on the full use of spit guards to ensure the safety of police officers, in line with the majority of other forces in England and Wales.


Police Officer Pay

The Assembly is concerned that the Government did not provide any additional money to MOPAC or the Metropolitan Police to fund an agreed police pay rise.

The Assembly called on central government to fully fund a pay raise for the police. It also called on the Mayor to write to the Government asking that it fully fund the cost of the

September 2017 pay rise and the cost of any pay rise announced in the 2018-19 police pay awards to give the Met the confidence to fairly remunerate police officers for their outstanding work keeping London safe, without the need to compromise other parts of the service.

How can I get involved in the committee's work?

- Contribute to our investigations. Details on our current work can be found on the [Police and Crime Committee webpage](#).
- Get in touch with us via policeandcrimecommittee@london.gov.uk.
- Raise issues of concern with [Assembly Members directly](#).
- Tweet us [@LondonAssembly](#) and follow committee Twitter conversations with #AssemblyPolice. 
- Come to a committee meeting at City Hall – you are welcome to come and [observe our debates](#).
- [Watch our meetings live](#) from your computer, mobile or tablet.



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