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Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
(Via email)

Tackling neighbourhood crime

We are almost two years on from the introduction of local priorities, as set out in your Police and Crime Plan. The neighbourhood crimes that make up the set of local priorities boroughs can choose from—such as burglary, personal robbery and theft— make up close to half of all crime recorded by the Met. At the same time, sanction detection rates for these crimes are low and are falling. You have recently announced a welcome increase in resources to tackle burglary, including widening the coverage of Met Trace.¹

We have examined the impact of local priorities on crime levels, victims, the public, and the police. We continue to agree, as we said in our response to your draft Police and Crime Plan, that setting priorities locally has benefits. It means that the police and other partners can truly focus on the issues that matter to those around them.² However, we are concerned that the focus on local priorities is not well understood by Londoners, is making a limited difference to levels of crime, and that wider changes across the Met may be hampering the ability of officers to tackle local priorities effectively.

¹ Mayor of London, [Mayor and Commissioner set out plans to tackle violence and burglary](#), 24 January 2019

² Police and Crime Committee, [Response to the Mayor's Draft Police and Crime Plan](#), February 2017

Accordingly, we recommend that you review the effectiveness of local priority setting in support of the refresh of priorities for the next year. We recommend that this includes:

- an assessment of how wider changes, such as the introduction of the crime assessment policy, more telephone investigations and the increase in the volume and complexity of crime, may be impacting on the success of local priorities, and how this can be mitigated
- an assessment of falling victim satisfaction in the Met's response to these most commonly-reported crimes, and how this will be addressed
- specific actions to improve transparency of data, such as sanction detection rates, which can be used to assess the success of this approach and the potential impact on crimes not selected as local priorities
- specific actions to improve the awareness and understanding of Londoners about the rationale, aims, and measures for the success of local priorities.

The introduction of local priorities is making a limited difference to crime levels

The former Deputy Commissioner, Sir Craig Mackey QPM, told us that the success of local priority setting would be seen in a reduction in the volume of these common crimes, and/or "increasing the people brought to justice for them."³

Success in reducing the volume of these crimes is mixed. The overall number of common neighbourhood crimes across London has risen by close to two per cent between January 2018 and January 2019: equating to more than 6,000 additional offences.⁴ According to recent MOPAC data, half of the borough local priorities are showing increases in volume.⁵

What is emerging from the data is that when one of these crime types is chosen as a priority by a borough, it tends to increase more slowly (or decrease more quickly) than the London average. For quarter 3 of 2018-19, MOPAC was able to report that performance with regards to these crimes was better where it had been prioritised than where it had not.⁶ For example, theft from person had decreased by 45.6 per cent in boroughs where it was chosen as a priority against the same period the previous year, compared with a two per cent decrease in boroughs where it was not. This was in part explained by effective targeting of moped-enabled crime. The exception to this rule was robbery, which had risen by 0.6 per cent in boroughs where it was chosen as a priority, compared with a decrease of 1.5 per cent in areas it was not. MOPAC's report explained this was the result of a steep increase in one borough.⁷

³ Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [21 March 2018](#)

⁴ MOPAC monthly report to Police and Crime Committee, 6 March 2019

⁵ MOPAC, Quarterly Report Q3 2018-19

⁶ MOPAC, Quarterly Report Q3 2018-19

⁷ MOPAC, Quarterly Report Q3 2018-19

We have previously raised concern about falling sanction detection rates across the Met and have heard that increasing numbers of crimes are playing a part. There is little data available on sanction detection rates in the context of local priority setting, but what we can tell from the available data is that, again, the picture is mixed. For January 2019, the average sanction detection rate was higher for boroughs that had made robbery, theft person, or common assault a priority than it was across London in general. However, the converse was true for burglary, theft motor vehicle and theft from motor vehicle.⁸

The above data seems to imply that something is happening, but it is not immediately clear what is being done differently to achieve this. We heard one or two examples from the DMPC, such as Operation Mexico in Redbridge to tackle burglary, and joint efforts between the police and local authority in Wandsworth to tackle moped theft. But more needs to be done by MOPAC and the Met to measure and demonstrate the different approaches that are being taken, which would in turn help to spread good practice across the boroughs.⁹

MOPAC already provides data about the local priorities in its dashboards and through its regular reports. In order that the success of this approach can be assessed in a more transparent way, **MOPAC should also publish up-to-date data about sanction detection rates in the context of local priority setting and your review of local priorities should seek to improve the transparency of data and other information related to the local priority approach.**

The missing piece of analysis from this picture is whether those crimes not classed as a local priority in a borough may increase at a greater rate as police efforts in that borough are focused elsewhere. If a borough successfully reduces levels of a priority crime, only for non-priority crimes to increase significantly, it is unlikely that this approach will be judged a success. **Your review of local priorities should examine whether this is an unintended consequence of the priority setting process.**

Wider changes in the Met may be affecting its ability to succeed with local priorities

As both the level of demand and the complexity of crime has increased over time, the Met has had to make choices about how best to marshal its finite resources. As a result, there are significant changes in the way in which crimes are being reported and investigated across the Met. We are concerned that these changes mean that the approach to policing local priorities is not properly joined-up, and that some innovations may even serve to undermine it.

The Met's new Crime Assessment Policy is one example of this. The Policy aims to provide a consistent framework for officers to determine whether it is proportionate to continue an investigation into lower level, higher volume offences, screening out those that do not meet

⁸ Met and MOPAC data dashboards

⁹ PCC Q&A [Jan 19](#) and [March 18](#)

certain principles.¹⁰ Local priority crimes may well be the very ones that are screened out, meaning that sanction detection rates may be negatively affected.

The shift from Borough Command Units to fewer, larger Basic Command Units (BCUs) has also had an impact. The 'Mi Investigation' model gives frontline response officers greater responsibility for the investigation of low-level crimes. Moving that responsibility away from one more specialised team may limit organisational ability to spot patterns and trends, and perform other essential duties. At the same time, the increased use of telephone investigation means that boroughs might not be aware of crimes taking place locally, despite them being a priority.¹¹ And we have previously raised our concern about how local priorities are dealt with in practice alongside the creation of BCUs.¹² We need to be reassured that efforts to reduce crime and make policing more efficient are joined up. **Your review of local priority setting should assess how wider changes, such as the introduction of the crime investigation policy and more telephone investigations, may be impacting on the success of local priorities.**

Falling Victim satisfaction rates are eroding confidence in the police

Victim satisfaction is an important measure for the success of efforts to tackle local crime priorities. We are concerned to see that the satisfaction of victims of these types of crime has fallen, with MOPAC noting in its most recent quarterly performance update that overall satisfaction is now at the lowest levels for 14 years.¹³ From December 2017 to December 2018 the overall satisfaction rate for victims of robbery decreased from 73 per cent to 71 per cent, with a fall of 78 per cent to 73 per cent for victims of burglary. The overall satisfaction rate for vehicle crime has fallen more starkly, from 68 per cent to 59 per cent over the same period.¹⁴ If the Met wishes to 'improve victim satisfaction', improving the experience of victims of common neighbourhood crimes will be a crucial part of doing so.¹⁵

We heard some people's frustration with the experience of the reporting and investigation of local neighbourhood crimes. Some felt that there are now almost too many ways to report crime, with little expectation management of what victims could expect from the different processes. Others spoke of victims not getting the support they should. The Victims Commissioner told us that falling sanction detection rates feed into victims' "dissatisfaction and feeling like they are not being taken seriously or there is nothing anyone can do about it."¹⁶

¹⁰ Met, [DAC Mark Simmons discusses the Crime Assessment Policy](#), 16 October 2017

¹¹ Evening Standard, [Third of London crimes investigated on the phone or internet, Met admits](#), 20 November 2018

¹² Police and Crime Committee, [Response to the Mayor's Draft Police and Crime Plan](#), February 2017

¹³ MOPAC, Quarterly Report Q3 2018-19 and [MOPAC Public Voice dashboard](#)

¹⁴ MOPAC [Public Voice dashboard](#)

¹⁵ MOPAC, [A Safer City for all Londoners: Police and Crime Plan 2017-21](#), March 2017

¹⁶ Claire Waxman, Victims Commissioner, [Q and A session with the Police and Crime Committee of the London Assembly](#), 31 October 2018

As these crimes are those most likely to affect members of the public, we believe that falling victim satisfaction risks eroding public confidence in the police more generally. The Victims' Commissioner has told the committee that victims of burglary, for example, do not feel reassured by the police response they get and that work is being done on what victims can expect where further investigation is ruled out. **Your review of local priority setting should include an assessment of falling victim satisfaction in the Met's response to these most common crimes, and how this will be addressed.**

The public are well placed to help tackle local priorities, but most don't know about this approach

Two years into the implementation of local priorities, public awareness and engagement with the approach appears limited. In our response to your draft Police and Crime Plan we recommended that Safer Neighbourhood Boards, ward panels and other interested groups have an input into the priorities for their boroughs. We have heard concerns, however, that local community organisations such as these are not being actively involved in discussions about local priorities, and that the process is not transparent.¹⁷ Participants at our roundtable in Tower Hamlets told us that those outside the police and council had “absolutely not” been involved in shaping the local priorities. Many participants felt that they should have been. This is despite being told by the DMPC that “priorities are influenced by the Community Safety Partnership, the ward panels and the community.”¹⁸

These local groups should be involved in the setting of local priorities, and be aware of them and how they are being addressed in their locality. Awareness of the local priorities amongst SNB and Ward Panel members was low, with a minority of those who attended our roundtable familiar with them and not all being able to correctly identify both current priorities for their local area. We observed some scepticism about the available choices for local priorities and a perception that other important issues locally—such as antisocial behaviour and drugs—had been left out.

The local priority approach presents an important opportunity to let communities know what exactly police are doing to reduce the most common crimes. It seems that, so far, the Met has not made the most of this opportunity. SNBs were created with the intention that they bring “police and communities together to decide local policing and crime priorities, solve problems collaboratively and make sure that the public are involved in a wide range of other community safety decisions.”¹⁹ If their members are unclear about the local priorities and what they mean for local people, Londoners can scarcely expect to understand how the police are tackling the crimes most likely to affect them. We need to see this addressed and will look for improvement from the Met and MOPAC in the coming year to better engage communities in local priorities,

¹⁷ Police and Crime Committee, [Response to the Mayor's Draft Police and Crime Plan](#), February 2017

¹⁸ Sophie Linden, [Question and Answer Session with the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and the MPS](#), 4 July 2018

¹⁹ MOPAC, [Safer Neighbourhood Boards](#)

and encourage their contributions to help tackle them. **As such, your review of local priority setting should include specific actions to improve the awareness and understanding of Londoners about the rationale, aims, and measures for the success of local priorities and the involvement of SNBs and ward panels.**

A chance to improve the local priority process

While the local priority crimes set out in your plan are often low-level and of less harm than the pan-London priorities such as VAWG, they can nonetheless have a significant effect on individuals and neighbourhoods.

The local priority refresh process for 2019-20 represents an opportunity for yourself and MOPAC to make improvements to the way local priorities are set, communicated, and tackled. We would like to see you engage Londoners more effectively on the rationale and measures for success of the local priority approach. We would also like to see the Met improve its communication with local people on the difference the approach is making, and the response that they can expect from the police when they report these types of crime.

We look forward to receiving your response to this letter, as well as any other comments you have on this topic. We would be very grateful to receive your response by Tuesday 16 April 2019. Please copy it to Rebecca Owen-Evans, Assistant Scrutiny Manager, Rebecca.Owen-Evans@london.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve O'Connell', with a horizontal line underneath.

Steve O'Connell AM

Chairman of the Police and Crime Committee

cc. Cressida Dick CBE QPM, Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis