

Joanne McCartney AM, Chair of the Police and Crime Committee

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Secretary of State for the Home
Department
Home Office
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London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London, SE1 2AA

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3 March 2014

Dear Home Secretary

Water cannon: Why the Met's case doesn't wash – a report by the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee

Please find enclosed a copy of the Police and Crime Committee's report *Water Cannon: Why the Met's case doesn't wash*. The Committee unanimously agree that the Met has not made a convincing case for why it needs water cannon for deployment by the summer. We are concerned that the Met is pressing ahead for an "interim solution" without clear justification for its urgency.

The examples the Met has given as to when water cannon could have been used are unconvincing and the Met has been unable to provide detail about how they would have been used in these instances. In many cases, the examples contradict the assurances we have been given about when it would be appropriate to use water cannon. We are also fundamentally concerned that the Met and senior politicians have attempted to frame this debate on the disorder in England in 2011: assessments have shown that water cannon would not have been an effective policing tool for quelling that widespread disorder.

Our report is a response to the public consultation on the Mayor's proposal to make funds available to the Met to purchase water cannon by summer 2014. It is informed by our meetings with the Met, Mayor and external experts. Our approach developed in part due to the seeming lack of scrutiny involved in the process undertaken by the Met and Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime. In one of our previous reports, *Arming the Met*, we set out that MOPAC should be an advocate for the public interest, and act as a visible 'critical friend' when the police request expanded availability of weapons. MOPAC do not appear to have carried out any informed challenge of the Met's proposal before the Mayor said he was minded to support it.

Furthermore, given the Mayor has already spoken of his support for the application, the public consultation appears to be a 'tick box' exercise. We believe that the public must be able to scrutinise

the Met's rationale for new weapons before decisions are taken. A six-week engagement process and one public meeting may be too modest to allow the public to influence the decision-making process.

It is certainly too modest to provide the basis for a decision affecting all of England and Wales. The fact that the Met's case for water cannon has been solely focussed on its use in London, despite it potentially being available as a national asset, is denying the rest of the country the opportunity for a full and proper debate. We believe this must be carried out before any decision is taken to license water cannon on the UK mainland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. McCartney', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Joanne McCartney AM
Chair of the Police and Crime Committee

Enc. *Water Cannon: Why the Met's case doesn't wash*