

London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting – 21 December 2017

Transcript of Agenda Item 3 Question and Answer Session – Policing in London

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): We now move on to today's principal business, which is a question-and-answer session with Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, and Cressida Dick CBE QPM, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Welcome to the meeting.

There are three leadoff questions and Assembly Members may ask supplementary questions after each question has been answered. Before asking the leadoff question, the Assembly will receive a short opening statement from the Mayor and the Commissioner of up to five minutes in total.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Good morning. I am pleased to be here with the Commissioner, Cressida Dick CBE QPM, to talk about policing in our great city.

We meet today as we near the end of one of the most difficult years for London in living memory, a year in which we have endured dreadful terror attacks and the Grenfell Tower fire. We remember all those killed and injured in those horrific incidents and our thoughts are with their loved ones. We also thank the brave men and women of our emergency services who stepped up in the most difficult circumstances imaginable. Their dedication and compassion has been incredible, a source of pride and inspiration not only to me but to all Londoners.

Since becoming Mayor, I have repeatedly called on the Government to ensure our police have the funding they need to keep our city safe, but the Government has failed to listen, and I have grave concerns about what this means for policing in London. The facts are stark. Recorded crime in the United Kingdom (UK) including London is increasing in volume and severity. The threat of terrorism is at an unprecedented level. The funding settlement to date has amounted to huge real-terms cuts in the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) budget.

The police grant announcement on Tuesday was an opportunity for the Government to act and to end the police funding crisis, but, unfortunately, this is something they categorically failed to do. Instead, they resorted to smoke and mirrors, pretending to give the police more money, but in fact just pushing the responsibility to taxpayers in London. This is regressive, unfair and, frankly, no one is falling for it. The MPS now faces yet another year of real-term cuts and will have to find hundreds of millions of pounds of more savings by 2020/21.

We will look carefully at the details and consult with Londoners, but the reality is that I am left with no choice. The Government is simply failing to invest what is needed to fulfil their most important responsibility: to protect the citizens of this country. Therefore, my intention is to increase the policing element of council tax by the maximum amount, an extra £12 a year. On top of this, I am looking to raise the non-police precept by 3% to help fund both the MPS and the London Fire Brigade.

However, even this extra money will not touch the sides of what is required. The MPS will still face a large funding gap, which could get even bigger if the Government fails to properly fund a welcome pay rise for hardworking police officers and staff, and will still be unable to protect the total MPS wage bill from cuts,

which accounts for around three-quarters of total spending. Worryingly, this means that police officer numbers will fall further and could fall significantly below 30,000 in coming years.

I want to finish by recognising our police officers. They put their lives on the line day in and day out to protect our city. Police Constable Keith Palmer made the ultimate sacrifice in his brave commitment to this vital work, protecting our way of life, and his loss is still fresh in all our minds. Our police men and women will again be out in the streets over the Christmas and New Year period, doing their job, working hard to keep us safe, and I am sure all Members will join me in thanking them and wishing them a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Chairman, thank you. Having delayed you at the start, in the interests of brevity, I will just say three very quick things.

The first is that I am delighted to be here this morning and I am sorry I was unable to be here earlier in the year. You may remember I was at the funeral of a much loved and respected colleague.

The second is that I am very proud to be the Commissioner and I am thoroughly enjoying the role. It has been a difficult year for the city and for the MPS as well and a horrendous year, of course, for those most badly affected by the tragic events. Having said that, I am enormously grateful for the support, interest and engagement that we are finding from our public and I am very grateful, indeed, to all of you for the support that you have shown to your MPS. Thank you.