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Thank you for the petition presented to the London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting on 21 December 2017 by Tony Devenish AM about local policing.

My top priority as Mayor is keeping Londoners safe, and this starts with real neighbourhood policing. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is facing unprecedented pressure due to central government cuts. Crime has increased in both volume and complexity across the UK and yet the budget has been drastically reduced. The MPS has had to make more than £600million of savings over recent years, and calculations show a further £370million in savings need to be found by 2021-22. These cuts are having a real and severe impact on the number of police officers we can afford in London. The number of police officers has already fallen to 30,000, and projections suggest by 2021 they may fall even further unless the government acts to provide a real-terms increase in police funding.

As a result, I have been forced to do everything possible to protect frontline police numbers. This has meant having to close more police station front counters to save £8million a year – equivalent to the cost of 140 police constables. I have also, reluctantly, proposed a 27p a week council tax increase. The additional money raised will go to the MPS and the London Fire Brigade, who have also been hit by extensive government cuts.

Ultimately, it is the government that controls over 70% of police funding and it is they who need to act to stop the fall in police officer numbers and the risk to public safety as pressure on London's police service continues to rise. I will relentlessly continue to make this point.

In my manifesto, I set out a clear commitment to restore real neighbourhood policing. I recognise the value of putting communities at the heart of policing – local officers who know and are known by the local community. I have managed to deliver this commitment, even in the face of these funding pressures, through increasing the number of Dedicated Ward Officers (DWOs) - police constables dedicated to individual London wards. Every ward in London now has at least two DWOs. They are our local eyes and ears, and are vital to keeping our communities safe and improving public trust and confidence in policing.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Despite the wider efficiencies achieved, the MPS must continue to transform to cope with the government's budget effectively forcing them to cut officer numbers. The joining of individual borough commands into combined Basic Command Units (BCUs), consisting of two or three and in one instance four boroughs, is a key part of this transformation. It is vital that the MPS is able to reorganise itself in order to maintain and improve its service Londoners with fewer officers.

The bringing together of boroughs into BCUs is a major undertaking which is why the MPS began testing the model with two 'pathfinder' sites: Camden and Islington (BCU Central North) and Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge (BCU East). These pathfinders were a genuine test which identified a number of challenges from which the MPS has learnt and adapted its approach. There is no doubt that the scale of change has been significant. However, the Pathfinders are now starting to demonstrate the ability to deliver a robust and resilient local policing service within the context of rising demand and increasing financial constraints. BCU response times have improved significantly from their early dip in performance and now equal, if not exceed performance in the rest of the MPS (see enclosed table).

I do appreciate that there are people, including the signatories to the petition, who are anxious about how the BCUs are formed and the implications for resourcing in their own local area. Geography, transport links and crime levels have all been cited as areas of concern, and the MPS has been working hard to mitigate these in the development of its plans. The MPS absolutely recognises that there must be bespoke arrangements for all of its BCUs – including the proposed joining of police commands for Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham. In a time of severe cuts from central government the MPS believes that the BCU model has the operational potential to deliver improvements to local policing, neighbourhoods, emergency response, investigation and safeguarding.

As of writing, the MPS is compiling a thorough evaluation on the performance of BCUs, with full feedback from the stakeholders who have been involved in the pathfinders. The Commissioner and I will consider the results of this evaluation before making a final decision on the roll out of the BCUs. The MPS will also publish the evaluation in full.

I wish to reiterate to those who have signed the petition my commitment to local policing, and that this has been strengthened through the addition of a second DWO in every ward, and that we will monitor these officers to ensure that they remain with their wards – that neighbourhoods are not drained of their local officers. Ultimately however, the MPS must be able to evolve its structures, both to meet the enormous pressure that has been placed upon it by government cuts and to better its services. This is why the MPS is developing the BCU model.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

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Response time improvement

The MPS target is for 90% of I calls to be attended within 15 minutes.

Month	Percentage of 'Immediate' (I) calls in target per month		
	BCU Central North	BCU East Area	MPS average
September 16	86%	77%	83%
October 16	89%	79%	85%
November 16	87%	79%	86%
December 16	86%	79%	86%
January 17	90%	78%	88%
February 17	85%	75%	87%
March 17	79%	66%	86%
April 17	79%	63%	86%
May 17	70%	52%	83%
June 17	69%	50%	82%
July 17	74%	48%	82%
August 17	78%	63%	85%
September 17	82%	73%	86%
October 17	87%	82%	82%
November 17	88%	84%	87%
December 17	91%	86%	85%