

London Assembly Police and Crime Committee – Wednesday, 4 September 2019

Transcript of Item 5 – Question and Answer Session with the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime and the Metropolitan Police Service

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): We now move to our main item of business, which is our monthly question and answer session with the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). I would like to welcome our guests, Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, and Sir Stephen House, Deputy Commissioner of the MPS. At 11.00am we will be joined by Claire Waxman, Victims’ Commissioner for London. We have shifted the agenda around to accommodate Claire.

We will start off with questions from me on Notting Hill Carnival. Deputy Commissioner, could you give me your assessment of the success of Carnival this year from a policing perspective and then also your thoughts on the Metropolitan Police Federation’s call for a review of Carnival after a number of police officers were assaulted during the event. I will invite you, Deputy Mayor, to come in on that particular point as well, but if I can start off with you, Sir Stephen?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Thank you, Chair. In terms of the figures, which is one way of analysing Carnival, these are the definitive figures as we have them at this moment in time. There were 478 offences recorded with a Carnival flag on them, which is down significantly on 2018. We saw, as always, that the highest number of offences were drugs offences at 193 drugs offences.

One of the reasons the Police Federation is making the call it made is because the next highest category of offences was assaults on police. There were 33 assaults on police, although that is five less than the previous year, just to put it into some context, but the fact that it is down by five is not really any excuse in terms of the 33 officers.

Those injuries range from being spat at in the face, which some people - and I am not suggesting anyone here - might feel is not that serious. Of course, if you are spat at in the face, you have to go through a check to make sure that you are not going to be subjected to some viral infection. That treatment, if it has to be carried out, can last weeks and sometimes months and creates a huge amount of anxiety in the officers. I have spoken to many officers who have said quite frankly that if it was a choice between being spat in the face and punched, they would rather be punched because, although it might hurt more, it is immediate and you know what you are dealing with.

We also had officers who were bitten and headbutted. One officer was bitten on his calf. The most serious injury was when an officer fell over and lacerated his hand quite badly on broken glass. Any assault on police is unacceptable and I understand why the Federation is asking for that review.

In terms of the number of arrests. there were 354 arrests in total this year and we had 37 arrests for assaults on police. We had 33 offences but I am imagining that is because on several occasions there was more than one person assaulting a police officer.

In terms of stop and search, we recorded 1,709 stop and searches. That number may go up as records are submitted, but that would be about the number. That is less than the previous year and the reason for that would be simple, I would suggest. Last year, as Members will remember, there was a section 60 [of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994] in place throughout the two days, whereas this year - and it is a positive sign - we did not feel the intelligence justified a section 60 on the Sunday, but it did on the Monday and so it was put in place for the Monday. The vast majority of the searches this year, as in most years, were under section 60. There were just over 1,000 section 60 searches and just under 700 searches under The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

In terms of how Carnival went, it was as usual, which is a very good atmosphere on the Sunday and the Monday morning and afternoon, but towards the evening of Monday the nature and tone of Carnival changes somewhat and becomes more confrontational and that is when we get more problems. That has always been the case and it was certainly the case this year.

Heat was a particular issue this year for officers and we had we had many officers suffering with heat exhaustion. Two were taken to hospital with suspected serious medical conditions that actually turned out to be heat-induced and luckily not as serious as we first thought. That was despite huge efforts by our staff to get as much water and food out there as possible. I know that the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor [for Policing and Crime] and you, Chair, all observed on a couple of the days and I am sure you saw the efforts that were going into getting water out there and keeping the officers well hydrated, but it was, as we know, extremely warm. The equipment they were wearing made it much worse.

In terms of Carnival organisation, there are encouraging signs. This was the second year of the same organisers. I met with the head of the organising committee a couple of times on the Monday when I was there and there were signs of good close working between the organisers and the police. That is a positive development and we hope it will continue.

There were a couple of areas where we still have concerns. One was with the stewarding, which we feel still needs to be more professional. So some of the stewarding within the arena events is good but the general stewarding on the routes still leaves a bit to be desired.

The other issue was float safety. This year, unusually, we had incidents with two floats, one where one of the large sound systems fell off a float and injured a member of the public, which is completely unacceptable, and another one where a float got stuck under one of the bridges because it was too high. That, again, really is not acceptable, bearing in mind that it then causes the whole procession to stop. That causes congestion and can be very dangerous. That is going to have to be looked at for next year by the organisers.

In general, we think it was a further step forward in terms of a safe and secure Carnival, but if I were to be asked whether the crowd congestion is at a safe level yet, there is a way to go. We still worry about crowd congestion and that is why we are so concerned about the stewards and so concerned about keeping the Carnival procession moving. I am sure Members know this, but it is probably just worth restating that the problems arise the minute the floats stop because the minute the floats stop, the supporters following the float stop as well and then the crowd just gathers around the static floats. It becomes very difficult for crowd congestion.

Also, for next year, we need to look at where some of the static sound systems are. There were too many static sound systems grouped in one section of the footprint and that needs to be addressed for next year because it caused quite a lot of problems with crowd density that we were concerned about. We did have to

take action during Monday to put officers into the crowd to try to relieve some of the pressure on the people in the crowds.

It sounds like I have a number of caveats. I do. We are still concerned about it. It is still a massive event. We still deployed something like 15,000 officers across the whole of the footprint on the days, the biggest deployment being Monday. It cannot be acceptable for 30-odd officers to be assaulted and it cannot be acceptable that the floats cause injury to members of the public. There is still progress to be made but we do feel we are making progress.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Thank you for that, Sir Stephen. Deputy Mayor, can I ask you for your observations?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Absolutely. I echo what the Deputy Commissioner says around the absolutely unacceptability of any assaults on police officers. I am grateful for those police officers who were out there during the two days of the Carnival. I was there on Monday and it was just unbelievably hot. I do not know how they managed. I am surprised there were not more officers with heat exhaustion because it was just so hot. I know you were there on Sunday. There were really difficult temperatures.

The Carnival itself appeared to be really what it should be: a real celebration of diversity and cultural heritage. Clearly, there are some issues that we need to look at as a partnership with the MPS, the London boroughs involved, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster, and the Carnival organisers. As usual, there will be a proper and detailed debrief that will take place in the next couple of weeks to really make sure that the lessons are learned, any issues around crowding and too many static sound systems can be looked at so that appropriate measures can be put in place for next year.

It is, as we all know, an absolutely huge event and a really successful event. There are still issues, but the Carnival and the safety of Carnival has progressed and moved a long way certainly since I was Deputy Mayor. I pay tribute to the new organisers and their professional attitude. I visited the co-ordination centre at Carnival and the Event Liaison Team (ELT). I do not know if other Assembly Members had the opportunity to do so. There has been a significant step forward in terms of proactive partnership working, engagement, really understanding what was happening and proactive work with the MPS. However, clearly, we have to learn the lessons and make sure that next year issues around float height, the number of sound systems on floats and things like that are properly addressed.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Can I bring in at this stage Assembly Member Hall, who was also there on the Sunday?

Susan Hall AM: Yes, I was, and I would like to echo the praise for the officers. It was extremely hot and when you think that they were wearing stab vests. I was with two extremely good officers and when they took their stab vests off when we got in the car, they were drenched. It was so bad. I would really like to compliment all of them.

Last year a lot of the success for bringing things down was put down to the fact that you arrested so many people in the weeks leading up to the event. Firstly, did you do the same again this year? Secondly, I assume you did and, therefore, how many people were visited or spoken to before the event?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): You will be aware that what we have done in recent years is, rather than particularly badge our operations in the run-up to the

Carnival as Carnival-related, it is just part of ongoing work to reduce violence. In the weeks leading up to Carnival we arrested 1,700 people for violence-related and drugs offences. We carried out several hundred search warrants on addresses and we put particular effort and care into making sure that a number of these people, if they were released after investigation, were bailed rather than released under investigation (RUI) and bailed with conditions to stay away from Carnival so that we would avoid any trouble there. We believe that was successful this year as it has been in recent years.

It is more of an integrated approach now. Rather than stopping doing all our anti-violence work and just concentrating on Carnival, we try to run the two together in a more efficient way so that we are impacting both of these issues in the run-up to Carnival. The arrests and the activity leading up to Carnival do help to provide a safe and secure Carnival.

Susan Hall AM: I would agree, but I sometimes think that if you look at those 1,700 people - and clearly there is a thought to Carnival on that - it puts more of an emphasis on how dangerous it really could be if you were not so proactive such a long time ahead of it. For those of us who are very concerned about the Carnival and concerned about the amount of time it takes the police to deal with the policing of this, it should be put into the mix because it is part and parcel of the police doing the very best they can in terrible circumstances. Where this Carnival is, it is so difficult to police. Those figures should go into it because it gives a better view of what is actually going on.

There were 34, I read, offensive weapons. It has been indicated to me that they were not just little knives. Some of them were staggeringly awful --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Machetes.

Susan Hall AM: Yes, machetes. Are you going to publish what you took off the streets on those days?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I am not sure if that is planned or not. I have certainly seen photographs of a machete that was seized on the Sunday night. That is part of the reason we put section 60 in place on the Monday because of that incident on the Sunday night. I am not sure whether we are going to be publishing as a group, photographs. I can come back to you on that.

Susan Hall AM: Personally, I think it is a good idea because people need to see what you as a police force are up against. I am glad you mentioned spitting and how absolutely vile it is to be spat at and, therefore, it underlines the great amount of pressure we put upon the MPS for the rollout of spit guards, which I will talk to the Mayor about at another point.

Do you think it is appropriate to send so many officers into a situation where every single year we can almost guarantee that numbers of them will be injured?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I am not sure if I would say it is appropriate but that is our duty and so that is what we do. Officers come to work knowing that they are at risk of being assaulted. If you are suggesting that Carnival is inherently dangerous, 99.9% of the people who go to Carnival go to have a good time and most of them do have a good time. The vast majority of the people there enjoyed it and probably did not see any trouble at all.

It is our job to try to make sure that we take out the troublemakers beforehand and, as your question has indicated, we do achieve that in a large measure, but we can never achieve it completely. There is alcohol at Carnival and alcohol - particularly with heat - will drive some levels of aggression and violence and officers

understand that is likely to be the case. It is a massive event in London and indeed in Europe and it is bound to have a level of drink and antisocial behaviour and violence associated with it. We will do all we can to reduce it.

I would love it if no officers were assaulted. That would be fantastic and that ultimately must be the aim of Carnival and the Carnival organisers. I am sure they join with us in that concern. All the while Carnival exists, and we believe it needs policing - and clearly it does at the moment - we will deploy police officers to it.

Susan Hall AM: Yes, I do accept your comments completely, but if you are looking at it from a public order point of view, do you think it has outgrown the venue, if you like?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Having been involved in Carnivals on and off since 2001, I think any debate about whether it has outgrown the location is probably redundant. It is the Notting Hill Carnival. I know there has been talk in the past about moving it to other venues, but if it was moved to another venue it would not be the Notting Hill Carnival. When you meet the organisers and you talk to the people who enjoy Carnival year in and year out, it is associated with that part of London.

Susan Hall AM: I know but --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is not my job, frankly, to say. I am giving an opinion but --

Susan Hall AM: All right. I will just say to you then that we are sending so many police officers into a situation where we know they are going to get injured - some of them over the years very badly - and perhaps something should be rethought, but I will leave it at that. Thank you.

Peter Whittle AM: Good morning. I just wanted to ask a factual question really. Do you have an estimated number of people who attended Carnival? When is it at its most crowded?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): To be honest with you, I have figures on virtually everything, but I am not sure if I have an overall attendance figure. I can tell you when it is at its most crowded and that is on the Monday. What particular point? I would suggest mid-afternoon on Monday, from my personal observations. A lot of people start to leave at around 5.00pm or 6.00pm and either less desirable elements arrive at 5.00pm or 6.00pm or, because everybody else is leaving, they are more obvious around that time. I would say mid-afternoon is peak period on the Monday.

Peter Whittle AM: Is it right that the police now for some reason do not issue figures on crowd numbers?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We do not think there is any accurate way of recording that. You have to bear in mind of course - and I know you know this - that Carnival is not ticketed. We do not count people in and count people out. It is impossible to know really what the numbers are. I am sure you could put a grid square over the crowd and assume a certain density and try to come to a total, but you would never get agreement.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It is very difficult to get an absolutely precise figure, but the estimate is about one million people over the course of the weekend. How accurate that is I do not know but that is the figure that I have been given.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Good morning, Deputy Mayor. Good morning, Deputy Commissioner.

Just to echo your comments, I agree that Carnival is a cultural event. It is not an event where the police need to be forceful. It is not a demonstration. It is not a protest. It is a range of people coming together to celebrate everything that is good about London and the Caribbean community. Also, this year, we again had the 72-second silence to remember the Grenfell [Tower fire] victims.

I just wanted to know from your perspective about the work with the organisers, who have done a lot in terms of making sure that this year's event was a lot more peaceful and a lot more successful. Is there anything you would change in the run-up to next year to try to make sure that again we see a quite peaceful and enjoyable event for everyone to enjoy?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is a good question. I am not sure I would change anything. I would say more of the same.

You will probably be aware that we ran a joint planning event at Hendon Training Centre with the organisers for a day. That was very useful and it helped to start to build a team ethos between us and the organisers, which worked well on the day. The Deputy Mayor said she visited the ELT where the organisers worked from. So did I. There were police officers embedded in that and the communication worked well. Inevitably, with the sort of event we are talking about, there are problems. Floats get delayed or stuck. People cannot get in or out with various vehicles that need to get in or out and that has to be resolved minute by minute. If you have a team spirit there, it does certainly help. I would just say more co-ordination and more joint training.

I would emphasise - and we have already said it to the organisers and they know it - that the stewarding is still a big issue. It is all very well having loads of stewards, but if they do not feel empowered or are not properly trained and directed and led, they are not going to do the work that we need doing and that is when we have to deploy police officers to do that. We really should not have to deploy police officers to do stewarding duties, but because of crowd safety it is a necessity at times.

I would echo that that is going in the right direction. It would be good if we could have conversations with them, picking up on the question earlier, specifically about how we reduce the number of assaults on police officers and what we can do there. There are things we could do, I am sure, to do that.

As I said earlier, one of the things that we think works well are the arena events where actually, although you are in the footprint of Carnival, you have to gain entry. Rampage, for example, was very well organised and very well stewarded and really takes care of its own footprint very well. That means we do not have to. We would encourage more and more of those sorts of enterprises within the Carnival footprint.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Yes. I know that that is something a number of the big promoters and DJs are thinking about in terms of their crowds and their audiences that come.

The other thing I just wanted to ask finally was around the figures that you quoted for the arrests. There were 1,000 under section 60 and then 700-odd [under PACE]. Do you have a breakdown in terms of --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): They were not arrests. They were stops.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Do you have just a rough estimate in terms of a breakdown by age profile?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I do not have that at the moment, I am afraid. We would not have had that by this stage but I can get it to you in due course.

Florence Eshalomi AM: That is fine. Thank you.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Inevitably it is probably going to be fairly young. I say 'inevitably' but maybe not. I will --

Florence Eshalomi AM: I would assume that on Monday it would have been more older adults as opposed to young teenagers.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes. It might be. I do not know and so I should not talk without the analysis of it.

Florence Eshalomi AM: That is fine. Great. Thank you.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): All right. I have just two points from my part and then the next section. I attended the ELT onsite and, again, the joint working of all the different agencies, including the representative from the Greater London Authority (GLA), was very impressive.

Secondly, it goes without saying that we thank through you all the officers who were on duty over the weekend and indeed in the run-up to Carnival for all the work that they did in sometimes very difficult circumstances.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes. This year was a particularly difficult year for officers because of the heat. I know it seems quite a glib thing to say, but it was so unbearably hot, particularly on the Monday, and officers were all wearing the protective equipment and the vests. Then we had other officers who were wearing what we call 'baby grows'. They are incredibly hot inside those. The officers did an amazing job just carrying out their functions so well in such heat and in some extreme circumstances.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Two years ago, this Committee produced a report entitled *Making Carnival Safer and Better*. Some of the recommendations are still as relevant as ever and there are issues which because of time I will not go into now but, Deputy Mayor, I will write to you about the marketing of Carnival, maximising Carnival's potential and so on.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes. As I said, there will be a proper debrief. A proper partnership debrief will take place with the partnership group and we certainly could look at the report to see if there is anything within that that has not been implemented already and what recommendations there are that might be useful.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Thank you. Moving on - I am conscious of the time - we will now move on to the issue of violence. I will ask Assembly Member Whittle to lead on this.

Peter Whittle AM: Could I start on the issue of the rise in particular of knife crime? This is a broad question of you both. We have seen a recent increase in section 60 powers. How do you anticipate this reducing violent crime in the capital? Could I maybe start by asking you, Deputy Commissioner?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The Commissioner has made clear her views on stop and search from the time she took over the role of Commissioner, which is that it should be used as an effective police tactic, that it should be used professionally by officers and that complaints arise when it is not done professionally and we do not explain properly what we are doing.

We have seen stop and search numbers grow month on month over the last 12 months now and we still maintain that stop and search is an effective tool. Section 60, a subset of stop and search, is particularly effective and, as you are well aware because we have discussed it before, it is done around either violent incidents or the anticipation of violent incidents. The recent change that the Government has introduced, reducing the level back down for authorisation to Inspector, is something that we have taken on board. We have not seen as a result of that a massive increase in the use of section 60 because the MPS always had on duty and on call a senior officer whose job it was to authorise section 60s. The fact that it has now gone to Inspector level has not necessarily changed our attitude to the use of it. For instance, after the tragic murder last night of a young boy through a stabbing incident, a section 60 was put in place. We will continue to use it as and when we think it is an appropriate measure to use.

Peter Whittle AM: We have had various announcements from the new Government about this subject and about the need for stop and search, etc. I just wondered what effect those public announcements have in the awareness of people who might be carrying knives. As I understand it, there is always a bit of a gap between what people think might happen to them and what the reality is. This was very highly publicised. Would that have filtered down already, as it were?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I suppose my answer to that is, regardless of what the Government is saying, people in London are aware that the MPS is doing more stop and search. Communities are aware that there is more stop and search being done.

Peter Whittle AM: They are? They really are?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is greeted positively in many areas but is greeted with some concern in others. Where it is greeted with concern it is our job to try to explain why we are doing it and try to make sure that the local communities, particularly the advisory groups, are confident that we are using the power appropriately and within professional parameters. There is no lack of awareness in Londoners that stop and search has been on the increase. We talk about it a lot and officers are exercising the power increasingly. We are seeing more officers from territorial units, as opposed to specialist units, embracing stop and search, almost relearning the power and using it more effectively. We think that is to the good.

We will continue to monitor our stop and search. As you know, we have about 20,000 body-worn cameras out there with our officers. In about 90% of our stop and search cases the body-worn video is on and we will review that if there are any problems. Officers turn it on because they know it protects them as much as anything else. That indicates to me that the vast majority of our stop and searches are done properly and are done professionally.

However, there is no real need for us to publicise the fact around stop and search. People know they are going to get stopped and searched if there is a reason for it.

Peter Whittle AM: I see. You already mentioned briefly there a bit about how you engage with stakeholders about when a section 60 is going to be in operation. First of all, I know it must vary from area to area, but who would those stakeholders be and how did you go about doing it?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): All right. One of the things that we are very keen to do is to make sure that, for instance, if we are anticipating violence or there has been a violent incident, particularly if there has been a homicide, we are very keen to make sure that what we will call our stakeholders for the time being and our partners are aware of what we are doing, are aware of the incident and are aware of our response to it.

In one incident that I checked up on, I saw the email that had gone out to our partners explaining that there had been a violent incident and that a section 60 was in place. There were 91 recipients of that email. I did not memorise them, but I can tell you that it would be local authority partners and a number of people in the local authority including the Leader and the Chief Executive and working down through the local authority as well. It would be local community groups. It would be local Members of Parliament. It would be local councillors. It was to try to spread as widely as possible the knowledge of what had happened and what we were doing about it, perhaps putting a section 60 in place.

It will vary from place to place because everyone has a different network of partners. It is done by email in some places. It is done by texts in others. I am sure in many other places it is done through informal phone calls as well.

Peter Whittle AM: Would that include hospitals?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It would do in some areas, potentially, yes, but they would not be top of our list. Our main issue is around local authority partners and local public representatives and elected officials.

Peter Whittle AM: I am sorry to be so detailed about it, but it is quite important. You mentioned your example there with the email. What is the kind of time scale then? You have an incident, you think, "We have to have a section 60", and then you send out a communication. Would that be in a period of how many hours?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): When I get told about a homicide - and I am usually told by text within, I would say, half an hour to an hour of it happening - the first question I will ask often back to the officer reporting it to me is whether local partners have been informed. Almost always, the answer is yes, but I need to be clear that it will depend on time of day as to who receives the message and at what time they receive it. If we send an email, people are not going to get that at 3.00am in the morning, although we may well send it at 3.00am in the morning. The Inspector on duty will often be charged with contacting local partners. If that is at 3.00am in the morning, we do not really expect our local partners to respond to it straight away, but we do expect them to be aware of it when they open up their emails in the morning.

Also, often there are practicalities around it. If there has been a homicide or a big incident, we will run some sort of Gold Group of partners to discuss what has happened and discuss what the implications are. That would probably be set for the following morning or midday or something like that and we would expect partners to respond and come to that. I cannot put a hard-and-fast rule on it because we work 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Peter Whittle AM: No, but it is an important to get an impression of how you work.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Sure.

Peter Whittle AM: Deputy Mayor, could you tell me what the most up-to-date figures are for the reduction in injury? I did read just in the press a while ago - I think in the *Sunday Times* - that there had been something like a 20% or 25% reduction in injury in under-25-year-olds. Do you have more detail or more up-to-date figures? This must have been about a month ago.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The reduction in knife crime with injury for under-25s over the last year has been just below 20%.

Peter Whittle AM: Is that for all age groups?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): No, knife crime with injury for the under-25s. Clearly, all knife crime and injury is incredibly important, but that is one of the key figures that we are monitoring to give us an idea about what is happening around knife crime that you are asking about. That is the key figure that we have been monitoring. It is down by nearly 20% over the last year.

Peter Whittle AM: That is over the last year and so, if the new intensification or extension of stop and search carries on - and I know it is speculation - you would presumably hope that that would increase that decline?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I want to see all knife crime --

Peter Whittle AM: No, I am trying to be realistic.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): -- significantly decrease and we would like to see that 20% reduction - it sounds strange - increase. We want a larger reduction, also, clearly, in the number of murders that are taking place. We really want to see a significant reduction in that. I would hope that the level of activity by the MPS at the moment out there not just for the Violent Crime Task Force but across the whole of the MPS and their focus on violence will bring those figures down - and as we know, it is not the figures but those people and communities that are affected - so that we can start to feel that and the community can start to feel the improvements.

Peter Whittle AM: I see. Deputy Commissioner, if I could just ask you again to go back a little bit, you have mentioned it but when you are engaging with people in a local community, has the reaction on the whole been that people are in favour of greater stop and search powers? Are they, in other words, reassured? Are they pleased? When we have various witnesses here before us, people might have qualms about some things, but on the basic they seem to think it has to be there. I just wondered what the reaction was amongst communities towards it increasing.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): What communities want is to be confident that their police service is there to protect them and will use the tools that it is given under law to protect the communities. Quite clearly, some people will see stop and search as intrusive and challenging for them. My personal experience from talking to people across London, including the victims' families, is one where they want more stop and search, but they want quality stop and search and stop and search done professionally and where possible - I am being realistic here - with courtesy. I want my officers, and the Commissioner has been very clear that she wants her officers, to act professionally at all times. They do face a lot of difficulties on the streets on occasions. We know the assault numbers are far too high. At least 70 officers a week are being assaulted across the MPS area. That is too high. There is difficulty out there and some confrontations, but I believe strongly that the vast majority of the law-abiding public want to see

crime down and safety up and, if that means more stop and search, they support that so long as it is done by a professional organisation, which I believe it is.

Peter Whittle AM: What more can you do, do you think, in the long term to engage and reassure and be effective? What more can you do?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is a simple answer to that: if the Government gives us 6,000 extra police officers out of the 20,000 that it promised, then we will put more officers onto the street. We will have a greater police presence on the street. We can reinforce our dedicated ward officers and our local community officers. Where they are broken - and there are many strong community links - and where they have faded through loss of numbers of police officers, we can re-establish those. We can improve the safety on the streets for Londoners, but we need more police officers to do that. We need 6,000 more police officers to do that.

Peter Whittle AM: That is a fair point. I am going to be quite specific here, if I can ask of you both. The Home Office launched a consultation on draft guidance in relation to the operation and application of the new knife crime prevention orders. What are your views on how this approach can steer people away from knife crime and serious crime? What are your views?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is no secret that some of our officers had a lot to do with the development of this proposal. I know the officer personally and I know that his pure intention behind the developing of this thinking was as a preventative measure and was based on feedback that he was getting from communities. They were saying, "We know so-and-so is carrying a knife or is hanging around with the wrong people. What do we do about that? What do we do with that information? We do not want them criminalised. We do not want them thrown into the criminal justice system. We want them stopped from carrying a knife and we want them stopped from associating with the wrong sorts of people and doing activity that is going to drag them into the criminal justice system". That is where the knife crime prevention order comes from, really. It is to try to spot that potential early and put constraints on the individual's behaviour and try to guide them away from behaviour that will end up criminalising them. That is where we are at the moment.

We do not see it applying to huge numbers of people, but we do see it as a quality measure that we can be optimistic about trying to avoid criminalising youngsters who do not need to be criminalised.

Peter Whittle AM: In that connection, Deputy Mayor, you did a campaign there one or two years ago, *London needs you alive*. We are talking about ways of tackling knife crime over and above stop and search. Do you count that as a success?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): *London needs you alive* was not a one-off campaign. It is still continuing and I am sure you have seen posters and we still continue working with schools around *London needs you alive*. It was to a specific group of those who may be on the periphery of carrying knives and trying to do some preventative messaging. We certainly have had a really good reach. I do not have figures in front of me, but we have had very good reach from *London needs you alive*, with millions of people viewing it and seeing the campaign.

Overall, the success of the campaign and the success of all the measures will be seen when we have significantly reduced, stabilised and continued to reduce violence in London. There is absolutely no complacency and I am not saying it is because of the *London needs you alive* campaign. It is a combination of

all the police tactics. It is not just stop and search. It is all the other tactics that are going in from the MPS to suppress violence.

You are absolutely right to ask specific questions. You have to see this across the piece with everything that we are doing, setting up the Violence Reduction Unit, the public health approach. The *London needs you alive* campaign is a small part of that.

Peter Whittle AM: The public health approach seems to have gone into the shadows a bit.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It has not here in City Hall. Certainly, some of the pronouncements from the new Government have been very much focusing purely on enforcement and the public stance on that. Here, the public health approach is absolutely alive and well and it always has been. For me, the public health approach is absolutely about enforcement, arresting people and taking those off the streets who are going to cause violence, but also putting in place those projects and programmes for early intervention and prevention, working with schools, working with communities and working with families. The public health approach is very much making progress here.

Peter Whittle AM: Thank you very much.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Before I bring in Assembly Member O'Connell, I should say as a constituent Assembly Member that I do get the section 60 advance notices as well. Yes, Steve?

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Yes, thank you. I was going to amplify that. Your point is a good one. Only yesterday I was on an email chain, probably down towards the bottom of the 70-odd, but it reached even down to me. In Croydon, Sutton and Bromley, it is very effective. The emails go out, the section 60 is considered, it is relayed and then there is a Gold Group meeting as necessary, which is one of my points in the question I have here. Again, we had three serious stabbing events the night before last and then a section 60.

I wanted to understand about the resources and the resource implications of granting a section 60 because there are more of them. They are not used sparingly, and I understand that and there is a question around that later. How does a declaration of a section 60 impact on the resources of, say, the Croydon Basic Command Unit BCU [the South Area] with more people pulled away, Stephen?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I know we have discussed this in the past. The whole point about a section 60 is to publicise it and to try to dampen down any future problems through increased police presence on the street and searching without the suspicion that is required for a PACE search, and so it does need extra resourcing. However, if you think about it, we put a section 60 in place in anticipation of or immediately following a violent incident and the violent incident itself will attract more resources. If we are dealing with a homicide, for example, which we are tragically sometimes, then we will have immediately deployed into the BCU assets from outside the BCU, typically the Violent Crime Task Force and almost certainly the Territorial Support Group. Officers from the Dog Support Unit, etc, will come into the BCU from other parts of London and then they will have the awareness that there is a section 60 in place and can carry out section 60 stop and searches. The two go hand-in-glove, really. If you get a section 60, it is because of a violent incident. If you have a violent incident, you are going to get more resources anyway.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): That is fair. My last point is a brief point and is about the engagement with communities. My experience in my patch has been good, but my concern - shared by others

- is about the BCUs and the borough mergers and the fact that those very good officers who have specialisms around engagement are increasingly spread very thinly. If we are there to encourage engagement with the communities around this issue and others, we need to be cognisant of the fact that they are spread very thinly and that is an issue, placing almost to one side the extra 6,000 officers you are going to get, because this is a specialism. There are some very good Chief Inspectors. I have a very good one down there [in South Area]. That is something you would need to be aware of to make sure that those communities are engaged. These are evening meetings, going out to meet people, and often they are spread very thinly. I just wanted to put that one down there for you really to think about. I will probably leave it at that, Chair, if I may.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Thank you.

Len Duvall AM: Just very quickly, I can recall an engagement with the Commissioner around section 60 and in particular when they were issued on a borough-wide basis. I can understand, as a supporter of effective stop and search, why that may happen, but the high numbers and the disproportionate arrangements between high-volume, high-crime areas - if I can describe them like that - and your high-incident areas were still an issue.

Can you tell us what discussions have gone on about the appropriateness of that? Let us put the cards on the table. Some of the problems that brought stop and search into disrepute in the past have been lazy ways of policing issues. I am not saying that all section 60s borough-wide or BCU-wide are lazy ways. They may well be an appropriate way considering the incident. However, if it is a high number, that clearly must indicate, "Hold on. What is going on here?" Are you, in terms of management, being intrusive and holding people to account and saying, "Why is that happening and what were those incidents that led to that borough-wide sanction?"

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service):

Commander Dave Musker up until very recently - he has swapped roles now - was the lead on stop and search and holds a regular meeting that is intrusive into stop and search. It looks at exactly the issues you have raised: how we are doing, where they are being done, how many section 60s are authorised, when, where and what area they are covering. If they are covering a borough or even wider than a borough, is that simply because it is easier to write on the authorisation a borough or is there a reason?

As we have discussed in this venue before, sometimes you get very narrow section 60s and people think that that is good. Observers will say, "That is good. That is being surgical and professional", and therefore a borough-wide section 60 must be lazy. It is not as easy as that, if I may say so. I know you are not saying that --

Len Duvall AM: I am not saying that.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): -- but I just want to reinforce that it is not laziness in most cases. I am not saying in every case. That is why we have an oversight group headed by a Commander to look at it and make sure that we stay on our toes and we stay professional. Every time I have asked about why there was a borough-wide one, there has been a reason why there has been a borough-wide one. Some gangs operate in a narrow area and some gangs operate more widely. Sometimes that gang is fighting with that gang and it is the whole borough and sometimes it needs to be cross-borough and not defined by a local authority.

Len Duvall AM: Yes, I accept that. It is a question of the numbers of it. The last time we looked at those numbers, it did look a little bit strange. I am hoping some work was undertaken in following up that

conversation that we had in this forum at the time, but I am glad to hear that you are asking those questions because that is important to me.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): [Commander] Jane Connors will be taking over from [Commander] Dave Musker and I anticipate will take over that role. I am quite confident she will be as intrusive as Dave has been in his time holding the reins.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Fine. In that case, we will move on to a set of questions around Operation Midland to be led by you, Steve.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Yes, thank you very much. I have questions initially to Sir Stephen. The background of Operation Midland, I believe, is well known. I really want to move to initially introduced Sir Richard Henriques' review acknowledging 43 failings in the investigation into the claims, and his criticisms around the fact that it should have been abandoned earlier, the claimant was believed for far too long, and it should not have been announced at an early stage that he was believed to be a credible and true claimant. Can you explain initially, Sir Stephen, how things could have gone so badly wrong in this? What is your initial response?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I can try to address that issue. I can try to reassure, hopefully. I have here a spreadsheet of the 25 recommendations from the Henriques report and I have a list of the 43 failings that he found. I would say that you should not add that up and create a total out of those two numbers because many of the 43 failings feed into recommendations.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): We are used to that sort of vernacular in this building and so I will be asking about the actual recommendations specifically.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): All right. What you are asking, basically, is, "How did it happen?" How we believe it happened - and we accept the report's findings - is that this was a particular time when there was a large number of complainants coming forward alleging historic sexual abuse. The MPS had come under significant criticism for not taking victims seriously, in many cases not taking victims seriously because we found that what they said was inconsistent and that they remembered things wrongly. That was seen historically as a reason to not accept what they said as being true.

Conscious of that, I believe that the inquiry team looked at what the complainant was saying and accepted that there were inconsistencies in what the person said, bearing in mind he was going back many years to what he professed were hugely traumatic, violent sexual situations. It was wrong and the Commissioner has admitted and said that it was wrong to accept what Nick Beech said as credible and true. I would say that, therefore, there was an overcompensation perhaps by officers into believing what he said and probably less questioning and intrusion. Certainly, Sir Richard Henriques' report says that the officer should have been far more sceptical and intrusive in their questioning of the individual. Had they been, they may well have come to a conclusion that he was lying to them, as indeed he clearly was.

There were reasons why. It has been looked at by a number of groups. It has certainly been looked at in depth by the police complaints bodies, first the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) and now the new body [the Independent Office for Police Conduct]. They found that, yes, the officers made mistakes but if asked whether the officers did anything unprofessional or illegal, the answer is no. They found that the officers have no case to answer in relation to that.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): I will interrupt you just briefly. The mistakes that they made caused massive emotional suffering to families --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Of course, yes.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): -- and the MPS is the subject of significant compensation claims as a result.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We are, yes.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): To say, "Yes, mistakes were made and that is it and that is OK", without even interviewing the officers involved --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): With respect, I am not saying, "That is it and that is OK".

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): All right. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) may have said that. I am not putting words in your mouth. Anyway, let us, if we may, continue with it because your point was a good one. It was made in in the context of post-Savile, etc, when there was a lot of criticism of the way that there were dealings with previous offences, but is that a reason indeed to go right to the other end of the spectrum? Is that professional to say, "We did not deal with those well and so we should be rather more credulous about fresh applications"? Your quote - and I never believe quotes in newspapers, of course - is what you have just said:

"... Operation Midland was carried out against a backdrop of intense scrutiny and allegations that in the past the MPS had covered up sensitive allegations about prominent people."

You took that hit at that time, but surely that is no reason for your officers to then go to the other end of the spectrum and say, "We will get ourselves in a place where there is an obligation on innocent people to prove themselves not guilty as opposed to, as law and equity dictates, the other way around". Do you feel that that many officers were bounced into going to completely the wrong end of the spectrum and being far too great credulous and believing of accusations?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is what I was trying to say.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): You accept that? OK. Fine.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I accept that because of criticism that we had failed to investigate properly, officers may have overcompensated and could have been more forensic in their questioning of the complainant when he came forward. If they had been, then they may well have discovered earlier that actually what he was saying was not true. As you quite rightly pointed out - and maybe I was remiss - that ruined the lives of a number of people, for which we have apologised, I have apologised and the Commissioner at the time has apologised. We are in discussion with the three principal people that we are talking about to let them see how we are moving forward with the Henriques report and how we are dealing with learning lessons from that report. We are trying to, as well as apologise, make amends to the people for the damage we have done to their lives because we know we have.

I am sorry if I do not sound passionate enough. I can assure you I am. We made mistakes and it has damaged people's lives, people who have given a huge amount of public service over decades to the United Kingdom (UK). We are uniquely aware of that. I chair a Diamond Group of very senior people who look at this. We have met virtually every week for the past six weeks on this and we have agonised over everything that has been done here. The MPS made mistakes.

However, I have also had to say to you that I have met the officers involved in the investigation and I do have to maintain the line that, yes, mistakes were made. They made mistakes. They acknowledge that they made mistakes, but they did not do it maliciously and they did not do it in any way, I believe, criminally. The IOPC, having looked at it, comes to the same conclusion.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): OK. Going on, we mentioned the review with 25 recommendations and you say that these are the subject of your Diamond Group. I hear that you are looking at - and perhaps you will clarify that - changing the way that the MPS will deal with these sorts of cases. I would like to hear your thoughts around that.

What would be rather good is that bodies like ours will be able to scrutinise you and how you are proceeding with acting on these recommendations. That is a bit difficult because the Commissioner has refused to publish the redacted report. Why --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Sorry, that is not true. We have already published a redacted report and we will in due course publish another report with even fewer redactions, but the report that we will publish in due course will have redactions based on a very few number of things. One will be that the content is graphic and grossly sexually offensive and disturbing and we will not publish that sort of language.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): I understand.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We will not publish details of addresses that will impact people who live in those addresses who have nothing to do with this.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Yes, that is obvious. I get that, but the recommendations would not be specific about individuals. They will be about how you will be changing the way the organisation deals with --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): What I am trying to explain is what we are redacting. We are redacting grossly offensive language. We are redacting addresses. We will redact a very small number of other details about people who do not need to be known to the public. Apart from that, the whole report will be published.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): It will be published? It will be out there soon with the full recommendations?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): I understand completely about the redacted detail. That is a given. We get that, but we would want to see what the recommendations are and how you are getting on with proceeding with them so that this will not be repeated. That will be me for the moment, Chair.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Yes.

Tony Arbour AM: Initially, I would like to ask about the redactions of you first, Deputy Mayor. In November [2016] when this was raised with the Mayor immediately after the report was published, the Mayor said that he had not read the whole report, but you had read the whole report at that time. Firstly, I understand that you read the report which was entirely as it had been written by Sir Richard. Did you think there should be substantial redactions when you read it?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I remember being questioned about this by you at the Police and Crime Committee quite soon afterwards. I did read it and the advice I was given was that the redactions were ones that were necessary at that time. It was two years ago that that happened. Now we have got through the trial of Carl Beech. That is why the MPS is now going through the report to see what redactions can now be unredacted. I know that the stance that is being taken now is that everything should be published unless there is a very good reason not to. Clearly, two years ago, there were still ongoing investigations and there was still the trial of Carl Beech and I was given advice that those reductions were necessary.

Tony Arbour AM: You see, I have the comments in front of me made by Sir Richard Henriques at the end of last month when he said:

"I am racking my brains trying to think of what possible covert methodology they are referring to. There were no secret bugs or undercover officers. If you consider the length of time between the alleged offences and the investigations, which is more than 30 years, what possible covert tactics could they be talking about?"

Are you saying, Sir Steve, that those things are going to be published that Sir Richard says you have refused to publish?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We are going to not publish graphic sexual violence in detail when it is horrific, we are not going to publish some addresses or identify locations that have nothing to do with the situation and we are not going to publish some names of people who have nothing to do with the case. Apart from that everything will be published.

Tony Arbour AM: I am pleased to hear that. You have effectively said that the IPCC or its successor has pretty much cleared your officers, saying they were not malicious and so on. What I want to put to you is that maybe they were incompetent. For example, Lord Bramall and Lord Brittan at the time of these alleged offences were in public life. Chances are they were under surveillance by police, security officers and that kind as former Home Secretary and former Chief of the General Staff.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is a stretch, if I may say so.

Tony Arbour AM: All right but let me progress. Whatever, they were in public life. They would have had full diaries; not, "It rained this morning" but would have been hour by hour and place by place. It has been shown in the report that dates and places produced by the man [Carl] Beech could easily have been refuted if these diaries had been referred to immediately.

I would have thought, and I suggest to you, that at a very elementary level those sorts of things could be checked, irrespective of false memory and things of that kind that you have already referred to. Do you not think that showed a lack of competence?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Again, I do not want to appear glib, but it is difficult to get past that mistakes were made in the investigation. We should have been more questioning of the allegations that were made. There were inconsistencies in what Carl Beech said, and all that has been pointed out by [Sir Richard] Henriques and accepted by the MPS, and as a result the lives of a number of important and very dedicated public servants were very badly damaged. However, a number of people looked at the investigation as it was progressing. I believe if they had thought the investigation was incompetent it would have been stopped at an earlier point.

I do have to go back to the fact that we were working in a particular time. I said in reference to previous questioning: was there an overcompensation as a result of previous errors? I think that is a fairly good way of looking at it. Were his allegations believed straightaway and not questioned? Yes, they were believed and they should have been questioned more. However, I am not convinced 'incompetent' is the word I would use to describe what the officers did.

Tony Arbour AM: I put it to you, Deputy Commissioner- of course, hindsight is a wonderful thing but I imagine these officers who looked at this had been to Hendon [Police College], had done all the police work and so on - that very elementary things were not done like, for example, interviewing the principals at a very early stage and interrogating things like diaries, official lists of engagements and things of that sort. Had that ordinary pedestrian police work, which I would have imagined would have been done at a very low level, been carried out the thing would have been knocked on the head straightaway. That is why I put the charge of incompetence to you. Are you not willing to accept that at all?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I do not accept that the officers were incompetent.

Tony Arbour AM: I am not saying they were incompetent; I am saying what they did was incompetent.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): OK, I am not sure I see the difference.

Tony Arbour AM: It is angels dancing on the head of a pin.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is a bit.

Tony Arbour AM: You see what I want to do, Deputy Commissioner, is link it with the fact that in the MOPAC report that has just been published, which we have just seen a summary of, public overall satisfaction with policing is at its lowest level. I want to suggest to you that one of the reasons might possibly be the things that have emerged since the publication of the Henriques Report that does appear to show a very high level - which is why I am using the word "incompetence" - of incompetence in policing.

I do not want to say it has made you a laughing stock but some of the things that police apparently did not do, which ordinary members of the public might think ought to have been done and would have been very sensible, were not done and that there was clearly very limited oversight of this. Do you think there might possibly be a link of the kind that I have drawn between the public perception of policing and the way that this matter has been handled?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Inevitably public confidence is driven by a number of different things, sometimes by people's personal experience and sometimes by what they read in the media and see on television. Therefore, I think undeniably what you say will have an element of truth in it, that officers seen to be acting in this way - making mistakes, inquiries being criticised so heavily and doing damage to public who should not have been damaged - is bound to make people have some sort of thought about that.

Equally when we have events such as the terrorist attacks in 2017 where officers responded so brilliantly and professionally; when officers are injured on duty regularly trying to protect the public; when officers are killed on duty trying to protect the public; when we run events like Notting Hill Carnival, which frankly is one of the biggest policing operations in the UK and almost certainly in Europe and around the world; when we run events like the visit of Donald Trump [President, United States of America] - I know you are shaking your head - the reality is they are also influenced by the professionalism, bravery and dedication of the 40,000 people in the MPS. To say that an incident like this will damage it, of course it has an impact but lots of things have an impact.

Tony Arbour AM: Deputy Commissioner, this was a very egregious incident. I am old enough to remember - although I do not remember them myself - people talking about the Keystone Cops. The way this thing has been dealt with does appear to be like that. We expect police to show the kind of devotion that they have shown in the incidents that you have just related to us to happen as an everyday event as part of the high standards of the MPS. In this particular incident the standards have fallen very low indeed. I know you have accepted that, I have your statement here and so on. It has had this knock-on effect.

I want to relate this to another thing. The MPS pursued this case very rigorously over a very long period of time. It was pursued very publicly indeed on what has emerged to have been absolutely no real evidence at all. I wonder whether or not there is a different standard of evidence used in this kind of matter than shall we say, for example, the allegations that have been made about the conduct of events in Tower Hamlets where I saw that this week you have decided not to pursue many of the allegations, or rather the City of London Police have decided not to pursue many of the allegations that have been made through the MPS. I would like to suggest to you there is infinitely more evidence in these matters that have been raised at Tower Hamlets than were ever raised here, yet one thing was pursued extremely rigorously with these terrible outcomes and the other appears not to have been done very rigorously.

Does the MPS take a view on how it is going to pursue cases, with what rigour it is going to do it and whether or not it is going to do it in the public glare that this matter was dealt with?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I am not really sure what you are asking, if I am honest with you. I do not want to volunteer an answer.

Tony Arbour AM: What I am suggesting is that the MPS is selective in the level of evidence that it is going to take on board before it pursues an investigation rigorously. I am suggesting that in this case, so far as we can tell, there was no evidence and I am suggesting that common sense might have told you that there was little evidence, whereas for example in Tower Hamlets there has been mountains - to us as laypeople, we do not investigate these matters - of evidence and the thing has not been pursued.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is very difficult to compare one investigation to another.

Let me just go back to say yes, I have accepted that mistakes were made in the investigation in Operation Midland. However, I go back to that the allegations that were made were of the most serious order imaginable of years of sexual abuse, including homicide. These are allegations that had to be looked at, they had to be taken seriously and they had to have an investigation around them and that is what has happened.

You have raised something there: why did the officers not sit down with the complainant at an early stage? That is because we do not do that. You carry out the investigation and gather the evidence. When you have sufficient evidence that is when you go to speak to the alleged perpetrators of the offence. You do not interview them early on to ask them what their views are, in most cases that comes towards the back end of it.

I do not think you can take one set of cases and compare it to another. There was oversight of Operation Midland. There were reviews of Operation Midland to look at what was being done and why it was being done. The investigation did last a long time. The allegations were incredibly serious. We had, we know, dropped the ball on allegations as serious previously and let people down that way, so we decided we would pursue this to make sure we followed what we thought was a genuine complainant. Did we get that wrong? Yes, we did. However, you cannot link that to another investigation and ask is there some sort of relationship going on.

Tony Arbour AM: I am a representative of the public and I wonder why you take this line of action in one case where there appears to be no evidence. You say they were serious allegations. I think many people would say they were so preposterous --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There appears to be no evidence now. There did not appear to be no evidence then.

Tony Arbour AM: The phrase 'common sense' as well. There is just one final thing --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The phrase 'hindsight' is coming to my mind.

Tony Arbour AM: -- in relation to this and this is the cost, this is the financial cost to the MPS and to the public purse. The figure that has been published is that it has cost £2.5 million. Does that include all of the legal costs? Does that include the compensation that Mr Beech received? In other words, is this the total cost that is going to be attributed to the public purse - I am not talking about the cost of this man being in prison or anything like that - in bringing the case? Is the £2.5 million the final figure?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I do not know what it includes, I would have to away and write to you about that. When you say the compensation to [Carl] Beech, do you mean the criminal injury compensation?

Tony Arbour AM: That is right.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is not coming from our budget.

Tony Arbour AM: But it did fall on the public purse, of course.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That was about £23,000. That does not come from our budget, it comes from another budget. I am happy to write to you and tell you what is in there.

Tony Arbour AM: Thank you.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): I will just finish on that; it was a point I was going to try help you finish on because it will be good if you can write to us. There is the published £2.5 million cost to the MPS but apparently what Northumbria Police carried out cost £900,000-plus that was charged to the MPS as a result, which was another £1 million on it. You have paid out money already on compensation and there is a very significant claim heading down the way. Therefore, it is a very significant cost that is as a result of, in your words, mistakes made early on. What could that have paid for? You aspired earlier for 6,000 extra police. This could rise to whatever figure you write to us about - £4 million upwards, who knows - and we will hear about that.

No one here is a greater champion of officers than the people around this horseshoe and particularly myself. However, if you were in another organisation and you made clear mistakes that cost that organisation millions of pounds, and also had a reputational effect on that organisation. The MPS is the most professional and wonderful police service in the world but this has had a reputational effect on the MPS. Is it right that those officers were able to then be told they made a mistake and that was the end of it? I am not asking for scapegoats and I am not asking for anything unreasonable, but it does seem that the balance of sanction against those significant mistakes seems to have been put to one side. Do you want to comment on that, Steve?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Only to say that Sir Richard did his report and he said one of the main issues was that it needed to be referred to the IOPC. It was referred to the IOPC, which is responsible for the investigation of the things we are talking about. It came back and said the officers acted in good faith; got things wrong, badly wrong, with horrible implications for people but they acted in good faith. It is therefore difficult for our organisation with the code of ethics we have for our people, which is that when they make mistakes but do so in good faith they will be supported. If they make mistakes and it is malicious or they do something malicious then we will deal with them and they will be dealt with either by ourselves or the IOPC. However, this falls into a category of people who were trying to do their job but they made mistakes and they got things wrong. To say they are responsible for the millions of pounds of published expenses is difficult. They are cogs in a machine and an investigation of this size costs money.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): I have great sympathy for those officers at that level doing so. However, they are not just cogs in a machine, they are in a very hierarchical organisation that properly bears not pressure from above but there are more senior officers reflecting on [Jimmy] Savile and reflecting that, "We need to do more". It is not necessarily those officers below. It is better I just leave it there, Chair.

Len Duvall AM: That is the point. We should not leave it there. We are concentrating on the people on the frontline doing a difficult job and making judgement calls in terms of very complex cases. The whole issue around Henriques - and I did ask the question of the former Commissioner [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM]- was that I thought the gaps in the report were more interesting than what it was worth. I do think there is a problem within the MPS about who is doing the checking in that hierarchical situation. Who is being intrusive enough? Who has that additional experience to say, "That is not going anywhere" or, "When I have read that it does not correspond to that"? That was the bit that was missing. [Sir Richard] Henriques avoids that

completely. He does not look at the people that were overseeing the investigation and then we get to this real problem.

I hope the learning lessons in the hierarchical situation will be: when should senior officers intervene in someone's investigation to say, "You need to look at that and you need to do that"? The whole issue of supervision was somewhat, I thought, lacking. It got to a point where the Commissioner was brought into disrepute because he must have been briefed by somebody to go onto the public airwaves to defend a crucial aspect of the investigation when it was quite clear - we know today, it is great with hindsight - there were concerns about the evidence you had, "This is all going hunky-dory and going in the right direction".

In the learning lessons is there an honest conversation and a clarity of the checkers overseeing the people who are doing the frontline work and saying, "This does not feel right here. We need you to either go back on that" or, "It is not your call. We think you have done enough and this is where it has gone, it is not going any further"? I thought that was missing in the report.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I have read the Henriques report several times now.

Len Duvall AM: There were some limbs missing.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There is frequent reference to Deputy Assistant Commissioners.

Len Duvall AM: I was thinking a bit higher. There were names missing, I wonder what they were there for. I know what they should be doing in terms of how it works in your hierarchy, but they were not included in that report.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Let me say that in the MPS of today, under Cressida [Dick CBE QPM, Commissioner, MPS] the focus is on operations and performance. With her background in investigation, both serious crime and counterterrorism, and her record of command she emphasises to us a very hands-on intrusive style of leadership that I think is the right approach. I believe I am an effective part of that. I think all the Management Board takes their responsibilities to be intrusive and to lead very seriously. There are many things with hindsight - because we all use hindsight - that would not happen today that happened in relation to Operation Midland. That is because we learned lessons from Operation Midland, not because we are better than the people who were there then. It is simply because we have the benefit of their experience and we have the benefit of hindsight.

Len Duvall AM: Chair, finally, I think that is what people need to understand in terms of how those learning lessons are put into practice. I do believe you can learn from hindsight about some of those situations and I do get the issues around the new victims in this case that were dealt with.

There is an issue in other places where the MPS has made mistakes and usually it is no further action. We are quite clear that the evidence was led that these individuals were not party to this, so I think there are some issues and I am conscious of that.

In terms of the Management Board, I am quite clear that you are clear in terms of what the Commissioner's lead approach is but is the rest of the organisation and that hierarchy there? All too often I am not saying we have Operation Midland mistake type errors because that seems to be on a mega scale, but often you see a lack of intrusive management or a lack of proper supervision in certain circumstances and that does not lead to

effective policing. How do we keep that throughout the MPS? How do people understand that their different roles in terms of that supervision is not about, "You people getting on with that because I am at this level and I do not need to do that" and, "I do not want to interfere in what you are doing". There is a right to interfere. I want to be clear that is throughout the organisation and not just at the top.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The different opinion I have from you, Len, is that it has to start at the top --

Len Duvall AM: It does, yes. No difference there.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): -- otherwise it does not work at all. I can assure you it does exist at the top of the organisation and I do believe it filters through the rest of the organisation. Is it true everywhere? Is it true in every operation and every incident? No, it is not. Do we get to some things later than we want to? Yes, we do. Do we sometimes miss things? Inevitably with a city this size, with its population and its business we do miss things. However, I genuinely believe that the approach taken by the Commissioner, by the Management Board and by the people who work so closely with us is one of intrusion, is one of leadership and is one of, "I am not saying this is wrong but prove to me we are doing this right and that we are taking into account everything we should be taking into account. What are the views of the community? Are we looking after the victims properly?", etc. That is the meat and drink of our day job, Len.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): If the Victims' Commissioner [for London], Claire Waxman, would like to come to join the panel? We will move on to the next set of questions, which is around rape and sexual offences. Before I hand over, can I thank you, Claire, for writing to us and offering to come to this Committee? It is much appreciated, thank you. Caroline.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you very much. Maybe I should start with the Victims' Commissioner. Claire, thank you so much for coming along today. The *London Rape Review* was published at the end of July. Do you want to talk us through your reaction to that and the set of recommendations that you have made from that?

Claire Waxman (Victims' Commissioner for London): To give it some context, I felt we needed to do a real deep dive into rape cases in London. From listening to victims and survivors many were struggling to access justice and support and we were seeing a real drop in charges and conviction rates, so it was really to get a better picture as to what was happening in London. This has been one of the most comprehensive reviews to date. I know the Government is doing its own end-to-end review but we have done an incredibly comprehensive review for London that has given the clearest picture to date of how rape victims are treated through the justice process.

The research team went back to April 2016 and took that month, when there were over 500 allegations of rape to the police, and then tracked those cases through the system to really see what was driving attrition, reasons why victims might be withdrawing from the system or why we were not getting the charging and conviction rates we had hoped. There were over 146 different variables coded for that research covering the entire case progression. Of that 501, 84% were classed as crimes.

I want to briefly, if I may, pick up from the last conversation. What this review showed us is that false allegations are rare. There were only 14 cases out of that 501 that were seen to be false allegations. I just wanted to put that out there.

What we then saw was 58%, a very high rate, of victims and survivors withdrawing from the process. That is incredibly troubling and something we need to look at to understand more fully what is driving that, which is what this review did in understanding why victims were feeling they had to come out of the system. That is around not feeling they were given, first of all, up-to-date information. That reflects a lot of the findings from the *Victims' Code of Practice* review that I did earlier this year, about not getting regular updates and information. When you are in a state of trauma and going through that it is really important to be kept updated otherwise people will give up and leave the system. Accessing support is absolutely vital for victims and especially for rape victims, feeling they were not accessing the right type of support. There were waiting lists obviously for getting in for Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVAs) or getting into counselling and being deterred from counselling as well, which is a critical issue.

If we look at how long these cases are taking, the review showed from time of report to the outcome of court was on average 18 months. That is April 2016, I can assure you that figure will be much worse now post Liam Allan and all the issues around disclosure. If you can imagine a victim not being able to access counselling or therapeutic services, or being dissuaded from doing so, it is a very long time to stay in limbo, to stay in a state of trauma and to not get the right treatment for that. That is another reason why victims felt they had to choose at the end about whether they prioritised their emotional wellbeing or whether they prioritised justice.

Obviously, disclosure and around looking at third party material - it did not pick up so much on phones because it was April 2016 - police often have to ask for social services records, medical records and school records and there is a delay in getting that from councils and social services that causes a huge delay in the system. That is another reason why victims come out of the system, as a result of that.

There were a number of very complex but interrelated issues as to why victims felt they had to withdraw. What this review has done is change the misconception that I have heard from police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) of, "Victims do not support the investigation", or, "They do not support the prosecution". There are real reasons as to why they are coming out. It is not necessarily a case of not supporting the investigation or the prosecution, there are critical issues as to why they feel they need to withdraw from the process. I made a number of recommendations to try to tackle that area in particular that would involve the MPS and the CPS, and recommendations to the Government as well.

Then there is an area around no further action (NFA) with 29% NFA. Very interestingly what we have been able to identify amongst that was that police were seeing inconsistencies in the victim's account and would NFA on the back of that. What this research has really pushed forward is some leading research from Canada about the neurobiological impact of trauma on memory, so there is actual evidence to show why victims and survivors could present in this way with inconsistencies. It is not a case necessarily that they are lying and they are not credible, it is the impact of trauma. However, this makes the job incredibly complex because - again, picking up on the last discussion - how do police then identify who is a genuine victim and who is not. I do not envy how difficult that job is but the recommendations around pushing this research and this trauma-informed understanding in the way the police are questioning victims, interviewing them, and even the way they are getting support is absolutely critical. I know the MPS is very supportive of this recommendation, as is the CPS. The CPS has admitted that in its charging decisions it too will look at the inconsistencies and based on that will not charge. It is for them also and it has agreed to do training to understand more fully this impact of trauma on the memory and how it presents in victims. It is very, very complex and difficult work to do but I think this review has really pushed that forward more than anything else ever before, to really put a context around why victims have inconsistencies in their accounts and how best to support them to get the right evidence.

It also talked about procedure, things where we could make improvements, around video recorded interview (VRI). We see that less victims withdraw and less cases fall if there is a VRI so, again, it is making sure those are offered. We were seeing victims not take those VRIs. Through talking to victims, they said they really did not understand what the process was and they did not feel they had the right support in that environment. That is quite, I hope, easy to address so the police have the right people doing it. It takes skilled people doing those interviews. Making the victims understand that process and that they have the right support in that process as well would make a big difference.

Unfortunately, as I say, the charging rates have dropped, only 6% proceeded to trial and only 3% resulted in conviction. It is a pretty bleak picture. Although having said that London is better than the rest of the country, it is only 1% nationally. Even so it is not great and that is why the Government is doing its end-to-end review.

On a positive, the Government has reached out to us. We are talking to it about this review and the research team will be going in to go through the framework on how this research was done. The National Victims' Commissioner [Dame Vera Baird] has come forward in full support and is writing to all the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) on this research, hoping to get all police forces to do similar research so we can start to get a full national picture as well.

It is a superb piece of work. I know the findings are not too positive but there is a lot that has come out that I feel we can really work on to drive some change, but it is tricky work.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you. There was one thing in there that I noticed around the issue of mental health, was it 41% of rape victims report mental health issues? Was it a surprise to you that that came out and what have you specifically recommended around that?

Claire Waxman (Victims' Commissioner for London): That came out and was indicated in police NFA'ing as well around mental health. It is not a surprise. We do know those with mental health issues are far more vulnerable to victimisation. We also know there is a cycle, so we are seeing repeat victims. There are victims within that 41% who are suffering from previous victimisation and therefore are victimised again. It is almost a vicious circle for them. They have been a victim, a rape victim, and did not get justice or support, have been victimised again and then their mental health is used against them to push them out, so they are filtered out of the justice process.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Have you made any recommendations around mental health?

Claire Waxman (Victims' Commissioner for London): Yes, again it is around training with police, trauma-informed training would pick that up as well. The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime has agreed to do Justice Matters next month because taking on some of these recommendations needs partners around the table to work a bit further and dig deeper into what these findings have shown. Vulnerability and mental health will be discussed at Justice Matters as well to really understand how best to address that.

It is all around identifying those needs and making sure victims are getting the right support for these complex needs, which is not happening as best as it should and that is the issue.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, how are you responding to this review and the recommendations that Claire has put forward? What are you doing with the MPS now to take this further forward?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): To reiterate, it is a superb piece of work and analysis. It is an important piece of work in taking forward – everyone knew there was a serious problem – real understanding about where along the system some of the problems were.

Obviously, very few of the recommendations are for MOPAC but there are significant recommendations for every bit of the criminal justice service. In terms of taking forward the recommendations, as Claire says we are going to have Justice Matters in a month's time so that we have all partners around the table to really discuss the recommendations and how they might be taken forward. We certainly had discussions via the London Crime Reduction Board and the sub-Board below that which myself and [Sir] Steve House QPM chair around what these recommendations mean, how we can take them forward and what needs to be done.

In terms of the commissioning of services for victims, it is incredibly important. We have taken on board, before the publication of the report through Claire's work reviewing the *Victims' Code of Practice*, what was needed in terms of victim services. The new Integrated Victim and Witness Service has services within it specifically for sexual violence. The extra money the Mayor has put in, £15 million for funding across the piece of Violence Against Women and Girls, has extra money in there for ISVAs. I am not suggesting we are bridging the gap of what is needed but we are beginning to provide extra services. Of course, there is the extra money that has been put forward and has already gone out the door for rape crisis centres and the Sexual Assault Referral Centres as well. As Claire has already said, it is about the support that victims and survivors are getting so we are doing our bit there. There is just a difficulty in demand and in terms of the money that is going in. Finally, we also commissioned Safer London for young women and girls to have young people's advocates to give them that support as well and one-to-one counselling advice.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Will there be an action plan that comes out from your Justice Matters so it is very clear how every agency is going to try to take forward these recommendations? I am particularly thinking of how you are going to ensure the CPS acts on the findings of this review.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I hope we will have some clear actions and agreements as to how it is taken forward from different agencies. That is a question of convening, influencing and working together, not that I have the ability to make them do an action plan. Certainly, all partners around the table are absolutely aware of the recommendations and want to do their bit in making --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: You can hold the ring, which is part of the role of this place.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Absolutely and that is what we will do but we are not pushing against a shut door, all the partners want to make a difference here. The question is how and the best way of doing so.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: In terms of the MPS's response, Deputy Commissioner, how are you responding to this? Do you have an action plan? It seems things like the VRI, some simple things like that, hopefully could help to lead to higher conviction rates.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We think the report is a good piece of work. We have accepted it. Mark Simmons [Assistant Commissioner, MPS] has written back to Claire in those terms, particularly interested in the trauma training that she has mentioned in detail in the report and here today. It highlights some of the issues we have been talking about earlier today in terms of victims' experiences.

Frankly, cutting to the chase, if we can get the best possible position for our officers who interview the victims and get as definitive as we can around what has happened and what we can take forward into the criminal justice system then we are all in a far better place. We are very strongly in favour of that and look forward to working on it.

We are doing a lot in this area. One figure that Claire mentions, which shows the difficulty of it, is that 6% who come forward go to court and 3% achieve convictions. As you will know, one of the terms of the CPS guidance is there has to be better than a 50% chance of conviction. It is getting 50%, it is far higher in other crime activities. All the way through the criminal justice system we see challenges with this. It is exacerbated for us by two things at the moment that we have discussed, one at length here, which is the digital issue. Much of the 18-month-plus delay is around digital interrogation. Again, we are in the midst of a quite passionate debate about levels of intrusion. I have heard previous Attorneys General talk about how there is a balance between privacy and the needs of justice. The needs of justice will always outweigh privacy, in the words of a previous Attorney General. That gives you an indication of where the Government was, it may not be where the Government is now. This is an ongoing dynamic in the country at the moment in terms of how far back you go.

I acknowledge, because it is in the report, we clearly need to look again at how specific we are in our analysis, not just and most importantly, to avoid overly distressing victims but also in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, if we have an 18-month-plus delay and it is because we are asking for that much forensic history from digital devices and we only need that much. Do not forget it is not just us as the police who will be asking, it will also be the CPS and the defence, possibly. It is not simply a case where we are just going, "Give us all of it", there may be other pressures in there as well. However, it is something we need to focus on.

The other one is the third-party material and the fact that takes a long time to come back. Again, we need to be more specific in what we are asking for and be certain in every case that we are asking for what is required and no more. However, of course, CPS and the defence may be asking for much broader. There are lots of complexities within the criminal justice system that come to play here to elongate the process and elongating the process, as we know, makes the decision for people around, "Getting on with my life and trying to recover from this", or justice. Too many feel that because of the length of the whole process and the ordeal they are having to go through again it is just not worth it so they are not getting justice. There is a lot that needs to be looked and there are no quick fixes for a lot of those things.

However, in terms of activity, we are engaged with the national work. We have our own work that is being led by [Detective Superintendent] Sian Thomas looking at how the BCUs interact with the CPS to make sure we are working as effectively as we can. We have set up a team to improve the quality of our files, mainly around disclosure to try to make sure we are not overburdening people with disclosure. We have a Rape Governance Board in place, which is led by the Head of Profession - Safeguarding. Rape performance is a standing item, [Commander] Sue Williams has a monthly meeting on safeguarding to try to push up our figures that are horribly low, far too low and we acknowledge that. We acknowledge we are not in the right place right now and we are very pleased to adopt the review and the recommendations.

We look forward perhaps to some movement on one of the recommendations from the Government around the bail situation and RUI. Again, there is a complication. I have looked into that. Why is it that so many suspects for serious sexual offences are RUI'd? The answer is because it is taking 18 months plus to get through the investigation. Remand in custody and bail is far more challenging for that length of time than it would be if it was three months. We are looking again at the guidance we are giving our own custody staff to say, "You need to be very careful". If there is a significant safeguarding concern, as it says in your recommendation, for

the victim from the offender then we have to be seriously considering how we process that offender. RUI, particularly in relation to a domestic-abuse-based rape is not a good option to keep people safe.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you very much for that. It is good to hear that you are looking to move forward on all of this. We obviously have been looking at the merged BCUs, which clearly has happened since this report that looked at cases from April 2016. Would you accept, Deputy Commissioner, that you have lost considerable experienced officers as a result of these borough mergers from this specialist area, that some of your detectives and investigators have gone off to other forces as a result of these mergers?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There has been significant change, as you know, moving to the new Unit and bringing people together into the Safeguarding Unit. We have done it for the right reasons. You know this, in the previous model we had artificial division between rape, domestic abuse and child abuse investigations. The more we learned the more we realised this all needs to be coming together into a multidisciplinary unit that will work effectively across these crime-type boundaries that are artificial. That is why we have done it. It is the right thing to do. As in any change there has been dislocation and we have lost some people, often it is to do with travelling distances and things like that. It is not disagreement particularly with the concept, it is just it makes life more difficult for them, so it is easier to travel to somewhere else. However, we are seeing, as we know, an increase in recruiting into the MPS. We do know where we have gaps in relation to these units and we are trying to plug those gaps as fast as we can, bearing in mind we have demand across the organisation and gaps across the organisation.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: On a recent site visit that myself and Assembly Members Arbour and Hall did in the summer to one of your BCUs it was quite clear they had lost a lot of experienced detectives. Yes, they may have some new police officers in but they lack that experience that you perhaps need. We also had the CPS at our site visit who said, "We are just not getting the number of referrals at all". Partly you have an issue with digital forensics, partly you have this issue with one of your - I do not know what the term is - forensic suppliers that had been compromised, which has now been resolved.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It has been resolved.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: There is still this huge backlog for digital and other forensics. Are you concerned you do not have the right levels of staff and the right experience in there and therefore we may actually see these figures get worse going forward rather than better?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I can give you the figures overall for the MPS. In terms of how many people do we want in our Safeguarding Units across the whole of the MPS the answer is just under 2,400 and we have just under 2,200 at this moment in time.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: What you will not have in those figures is how many of those 2,200 are perhaps on maternity leave and therefore you have vacancies that effectively you are carrying --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, of course.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: -- which is always a particular problem in the safeguarding arena rather than in other areas.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is sometimes more exacerbated in that Unit than elsewhere, which is why we are working so hard - I am sure you know - on our policies around maternity leave and returners from maternity leave. We have a really strong programme to

encourage people to come back, and to make sure when they come back they come back effective and fully up to speed with new legislation and new training. We are working hard to encourage people to come back. We know that we lose quite a high number of women officers four years plus not usually because of the first child but the second child is usually the problem. We have been running events to bring those people back into the organisation and for those who are on maternity leave. Yes, that is a problem, but we are trying to address that problem and we are trying to increase numbers across the board.

I do not want to go back to it artificially but if we get more officers then some of those officers will go into safeguarding.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: What really concerned me, we have done a couple of these BCU visits, is the workload, the strain the officers are under and the hours they are having to work. I can see why some people would leave, particularly if they have caring responsibilities. The fact is that these managers who are supervising, which goes back to some of the points that Assembly Member Duvall was making earlier, cannot cope with what they are supposed to supervise. There are far fewer supervisors in place. They are managing hundreds of cases at any one time. It does not feel to me that the model you have put in place is right at the moment. Are you going to review that and make some adjustments, maybe on the basis of this Rape Review and the recommendations from the Victims' Commissioner and also from talking to frontline staff who are saying it is not really working at the moment?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I challenge that officers are carrying hundreds of cases, they are not.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: The supervisors are I think from the evidence. I realise, having brought my notebooks with notes in that it was in my previous one so I do not have the figures down here but that is what I picked up at our site visit.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The sort of figures I am looking at in terms of workload are ranging - it is a big spreadsheet - roughly from six files through to I think I saw one about 16, which was the highest. To be covering hundreds of files a supervisor would have to be covering an awful lot of officers. I am not sure I would go along with the "hundreds", if I am honest. We do keep a measure of what officers' caseloads look like. That is supervised and it is up to the supervisors to make sure it stays equitable across the officers. I do not deny that these officers are working with a very heavy workload with some very traumatic material that they are dealing with. On the one hand we are saying we are not putting enough work through, and on the other we are saying our officers are working very hard. They are trying to put files through, but they are up against the things I have talked about, which is that there is a huge blockage in time due to digital and due to the third-party information issues.

I think we have a model that will work. It is under constant review. Amanda Pearson [Commander, MPS], who leads on the BCUs, is constantly doing reviews of all aspects of the BCUs and the work. We are not in any way complacent about the model. We have not put the model in place and "That's it, it's done now". It is under continual review. We are looking at it very regularly to make sure we can try to make it as effective as possible.

These officers are under pressure. It is a very high-pressure area. If we had more then we could alleviate that but we need experienced officers, as you have indicated. We do not want to lose experience as well. I am not saying this is a perfect situation, far from it. We know we need to do more. We know we need to improve our training around the trauma-informed situation. However, a lot of it is down to the digital stuff causing huge delays, the disclosure situation being so challenging for officers and the way the court process works does not assist the officers in putting files together quickly and moving it through the system.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you. We are seeing some of the issues that we have raised before. Sophie, perhaps you could let us know when this Justice Matters meeting is. They are open for us to sit in, are they not?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Sorry, yes, absolutely.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: If you could let us know about that and we could then see the follow-up action plan so we can keep a note on this. Likewise, Claire, anything you are doing in this area, which I know the Committee is particularly interested in.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Without wanting to prolong it any further, in terms of reviewing the BCU restructure that is something I meet with Mark Simmons [Assistant Commissioner, MPS] and Amanda Pearson [Commander, MPS] regularly to look at in terms of continuing to make sure there are any tweaks that are needed.

The thing about the case files, I also have visited the BCUs to talk about what is happening with safeguarding and talk to officers. What has happened as well is that there is much greater visibility and there is the Safeguarding Dashboard that supervisors can now go into and absolutely see how many cases are in. I do not know if you saw that when you were visiting. There have been improvements but, as Steve says, it does have to be kept under review and we do have to make sure it is doing what it is expected to do.

I do also get reports back and we can see from some of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills reports coming back that safeguarding has improved and the restructure has been part of that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Perhaps you might want to look at the number of cases supervisors are managing and so on because that is certainly one of the many things I picked up on these visits. Thank you.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Thank you, Caroline. We are moving on to the next set of questions on preparation for a no-deal European Union (EU) exit and implications for policing in London. Len.

Len Duvall AM: The last time we asked questions around this you were here, Steve. I wonder if you can give us a general statement updating where we are on those preparations and the assessments you have been asked to undertake?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The one thing that has changed, probably simply due to the politics and the shifting timescales, is the public order situation in relation to this which goes up and down in terms of tension based on, frankly, the politics and where we are in the process. We are anticipating a fair level of demonstrations in London over the next few weeks and months in relation to Brexit. Everything else really is as it was the last time I spoke with you.

I chair a very regular Brexit meeting of all parts of the organisation to look at our readiness for Brexit. It is going to be a topic at the next Commissioner senior leadership event so people are up to speed with what is going on and we can pick up any ideas that they may have on any threats to our business continuity.

We cover all areas from our commercial contracts through to operational readiness for demonstrations and operational readiness on the BCUs in terms of any issues that may arise on BCUs, particularly working closely with the local councils to make sure we have joined-up plans around any issues that might occur.

Len Duvall AM: Let us hone in to some specifics around some of the issues. In terms of the additional operation pressures on potential deployment issues, are we envisaging cancelling leave, what is the thinking about that if no deal occurs?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Again, that is a bit fluid. We are anticipating, if it is 31 October and we leave with no deal at that point, that may be a day we have to cancel leave. It may be important to have as many officers available as possible. However, as we can see from events in Parliament, we are certainly not in control of the situation and therefore it has to remain quite fluid for us. We are well aware that we have far more cancelled leave days this year than in previous years. It is approaching 15 days so far designated as 'Red Days' and normally 'Red Days' are around about four or five, therefore we are putting an awful lot of demand on our officers because of the elongation of this.

Len Duvall AM: Those demands on officers would be not just be cancelling some of their leave arrangements but also internal redeployment of officers, is that part of the planning regime or not?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We are not looking at massive internal redeployment at this moment in time because we do not know where the pressures are going to arise. It may be it is a public order pressure in and around central London. It may be that it is actually other issues on BCUs and we just need more officers on duty to deal with them and provide public reassurance on the BCUs. At the moment we are not anticipating a large amount of mutual aid to other forces from the MPS. That is not something we are being asked to provide in any big numbers at this moment in time.

Len Duvall AM: The big numbers, let us go on to that, in terms of mutual aid. I think the last time we discussed this we were talking about Northern Ireland. We have already seen Police Scotland and its commitment. If asked by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) our commitment would be 150 officers, is that still the case? When we were talking you were just about to send them on their training that is mostly around public order.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes. Some of these would also be specialist officers rather than simply public order officers in sheer numbers. That is what we have trained up in public order tactics for Northern Ireland, yes.

Len Duvall AM: If that request came what sort of deployment period would we be looking for, for them to relocate to Northern Ireland?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): In terms of how long would it take?

Len Duvall AM: No, the period of time. What would be the minimum?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There would be no point in them going for a single day. We would expect them to be going for two or three days, probably up to a week but not much more than that.

Len Duvall AM: That is what you would be looking at in terms of managing those numbers?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, because we have 150 who are trained obviously we may not send all of those at any one time. If it is going to be an ongoing commitment then it would be pointless sending them all one week and not having any the next week.

It is important to say here we have not had any request from PSNI for any mutual aid so far. If we get one we will look at it, we have not had a request yet.

Len Duvall AM: It is something you keep constantly under review and you have to be on standby to deliver if that request is made?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Sure, we have to be on standby to deliver mutual aid to a number of forces nationally if it is required.

Len Duvall AM: It is slightly different from being deployed down into Kent to help them out marshalling lorries or maybe some civil disorder there to being redeployed to Northern Ireland. There is slightly a different context.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is acknowledged because the tactics are different and that is why they had the extra training, yes.

Len Duvall AM: In terms of other issues, some of the stuff that has either been leaked or Government has put into the public domain, and planning for the resilience of these issues and around that, one of the missing bits is the gap about people's behaviour. The police have done lots of work around public order issues, behaviour and what happens in certain circumstances, learning lessons from the past and all the rest of it.

In terms of some of the other deployment issues, there has been talk in Yellowhammer about fuel shortages and issues with food distribution. We are told it is not the worst-case scenario; these are possible scenarios in terms of no deal. What would be the role of the police in those circumstances, making sure that the right goods get through if there are issues around human behaviour that necessitate you taking action? What is the thinking around that?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Your phrase 'human behaviour' is the one I would focus on. We will respond to outbreaks of disorder and we will respond to criminality. We will not be providing any sort of assistance with the distribution chain short of that. If there are fuel shortages - and I have no idea whether that is going to be the scenario or not - and they are properly managed by the companies and by the petrol stations, the police will not be involved in that. If there is disorder - as there would be for any other reason, as there would be for disorder at a football match or anywhere else - then the police will engage.

Len Duvall AM: Let us look at the other side of leaving the EU, whether it is no deal or not, and some of the arrangements we have had with the EU that will cease at some stage. How are those negotiations going? Of course the MPS is in a special position because of its locus and other issues with our European partners. We are sitting at the table in these debates but presuming we believe nationally that they have been dealt with, where are we on some of those programmes that I think have been raised with you before? If we leave, we cannot keep those programmes - they have to be different - but clearly there are arrangements to try to maintain some semblance of co-operation with those on the European mainland around dealing with criminality. Where are we on that?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is a UK approach to this. It is being led by one of our officers, a Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC), Richard Martin, but he is leading on behalf of the UK. The unit that he has set up is the International Crime Coordination Centre. It is based in London but it has single points of contact across all the forces in the UK. What they are doing is putting in place a network so that forces can as easily as possible access the replacement arrangements that will be in place in the event of the existing arrangements not being in place.

Len Duvall AM: Are they temporary arrangements? Do you envisage a period where we can renegotiate those to increase their capabilities? From the Committee's point of view, the arrangements in place are not the same as what they were in the past but are there opportunities in the future, do you envisage, for maybe new treaties or new negotiations once things have settled down, if and when?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is probably not that dissimilar to trade arrangements in many respects, in that given time we will be able to enter into agreements with countries. There is a question as to whether or not we can do that bilaterally or whether we have to do it with the EU as a group. That has to be bottomed out. As time goes on, we may well be able to put in place more effective alternative arrangements. What we are going to go to in the event of us leaving is, in many respects, the predecessor or what was in place before the EU came along. They are in existence but they are often not as effective as what is in place right now.

Len Duvall AM: Long-term, the MPS has a good record of international cooperation that extends to more than just protocols and processes. Will it lead to further international deployment of embedded officers in some locations, if it warranted that, on behalf of UK police?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is a role that has really been taken over by the National Crime Agency (NCA).

Len Duvall AM: They would do that rather than yourselves?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Len Duvall AM: They would facilitate any handling and liaison type roles that might occur?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Len Duvall AM: Is there a pattern around the sorts of criminality that we have been dealing with? We must have some history now of how those processes have worked on our behalf. Is there a pattern of where it might be appropriate to focus? I do not want to criminalise so I do not want to name the countries, but is there a pattern where you would focus in a certain region where it may well be to our advantage to have that sort of liaison by the NCA?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think it is common sense, Len. If you look at where the NCA has liaison officers based, they are based where there is business, to put it crudely. They are not based where there is no business.

Len Duvall AM: It is already in existence.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Can I just add a couple of things in terms of that? Obviously your questions about leaving depend on whether there is a deal or no deal because if we leave with no deal there will be nothing. If there is a deal, there are some transitional arrangements and then it is what happens after that. Even with a deal, we will not be part of Eurojust, we will not be part of Europol, we will not be sitting at the strategic table having an influence over strategic decisions and we will not have joint investigation teams. You may be able to put some bilateral arrangements in place but we will lose significant influence over crime and security in Europe and that is incredibly important.

Then there is of course the issue around extradition. Some countries will not extradite to another country if they are not part of the EU, Germany being one, and it is in their constitution. I cannot see there being an easy path to having bilateral agreements with Germany when they will have to have a referendum on their constitution. It is not a good place. An even worse place is no deal but even leaving Europe with a deal will be very difficult in some areas.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you for that intervention. Is this high on the agenda of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) across England and Wales and are they lobbying the Home Office to say, "OK, whatever happens here, we have to do more. Regardless of what the statements are, what are you doing, UK Government, around this?"

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It is. We have regular meetings of all the PCCs and we have had discussions around Brexit. We have a lead PCC for Brexit, Lord Willy Bach, who is the PCC for Leicestershire. He is the lead on this in terms of lobbying the Government.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you for that. Chair, just moving on, forgive me, Deputy Commissioner, my office was in contact with someone in the police preparing your briefing today and gave notice that I would be asking some questions around some issues that I raised with the Commissioner. I understand that you do not think that is in your briefing note. It is regarding the investigation into Leave.EU in terms of two allegations.

Back in May this year, the Commissioner was at this meeting. The meeting was also joined by the Electoral Commission. In fact the day before, the MPS signed a very unique protocol with them about how they would do any future investigations arising on it. The trouble was, in terms of the Commissioner, it was quite clear she was expecting some results in weeks. I do not want to go into details of the investigation; I am not asking about that. It is now three months later and people are becoming concerned about how this investigation has proceeded. There are parallels to other investigations in the past. Again, if it is not in your briefing notes, can you give any indication of when there might well be some news about what is, I think, an important investigation regarding democracy and some of those issues? There are parallels, I think we can say, with what happened in Tower Hamlets, but I do not want to go into the Tower Hamlets issue. Could you give us any updates?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The update I can give you is that, as we know, we are dealing with three specific individuals or cases. One case is with the CPS for their consideration and we are proceeding with the other two cases but they are not yet with the CPS. We expect they will be.

Len Duvall AM: Inevitably one does not want to put pressure on, but is there an expectation of a time aspect to those last two? It has been some period. The allegations previously were in 2018.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The case that is with the CPS was referred early last month [August 2019]. I do not have a timescale for the other two cases but I do not expect it to be a very long period of time. I cannot do better than that, I am afraid.

Len Duvall AM: OK. Now, on the other issues, I do not want to quote the Commissioner verbatim about the Electoral Commission but I think we could safely say that both sides said some very good words about each other. Literally in the space of May to July we see some very uncomplimentary things said about the Electoral Commission that they did not recognise, which came in an exchange of letters that became public. I do not believe the Commissioner misled this Committee.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I do not believe she did either.

Len Duvall AM: I do not believe she misled this Committee over what she said. I do not understand how that can be in the space of that period of time, commenting over a period preceding what the Commissioner was reporting to this Committee and saying to this Committee, what happened? What was this about? It is certainly not something this Committee would recognise from the meeting in May. Somehow that deteriorated into this exchange from the MPS blaming another agency for their supposed failings.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I spoke to Alex Murray, who is the Commander leading this investigation, yesterday. What he was keen for me to stress is that he has a very good working relationship with the Electoral Commission. On a day-to-day basis they have differences of opinions about things but in general the relationship is a good working relationship. We believe we have all the information and data that we need to carry out the investigation from the Electoral Commission and are in a position to proceed with it. Relationships, as I say, are good. We are trying to work with them on a memorandum of understanding to put it on a more official footing but he is happy with the working relationship. I do not really have the detail to go into why it looked different in print.

Len Duvall AM: Do you want to write to me then, and copy it to this Committee?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I can do, sure.

Len Duvall AM: It is such a damning exchange by your legal officers within the MPS in terms of the Electoral Commission. Presumably they are commissioned by somebody else. Someone must have given them that information for them to write to the Electoral Commission in that way, and/or, almost certainly, who put it into the public domain. It would not be the Electoral Commission who put it into the public domain. It can only have come from one other source. We presume it is tight. It is either the MPS or the Electoral Commission. I would not want, if I was in the Electoral Commission, to put what was said about me into the public domain. I am only leading to the view that someone in the MPS sought to put that into the public domain to defend their position of why they had not proceeded with the cases in, from my point of view, a timely manner.

I made a flippant remark saying that every time I seemed to write a letter to, as I think it was then Commander [Neil] Jerome, something happened incrementally. Of course it just appears like that. I just think someone needs to ask some other questions about how long this has taken and why. It does go back to an earlier conversation that is so unusual in terms of the MPS. It is either the 'too difficult' box or a sensitive issue, or it is about rich and powerful people and the police not being willing to go into those difficult and complex areas. I am very grateful for you telling me that we have got to the CPS.

It just seems to me it is a matter of whether the law has been broken or it has not. I am not going to come looking for you if you come back and tell me it has not, to be honest, but the length of time it takes just gives a further doubt that the MPS is either a) not taking it seriously, or b) does not want to proceed with it because it is in that 'too difficult' box. It is not just me saying that, there are other commentators, and I do think it goes back then to some of the original things raised earlier on about reputational damage that is unnecessary around how we pick and choose which investigations we are going to do.

I know that you personally, Deputy Commissioner, do not pick and choose crimes. You go and chase the evidence, if there is evidence, and you bring people to court, but there is something about these particular issues the MPS has problems with and I just do not understand. I know they are complex and I know it does take time sometimes but in terms of what has been presented to me, exchanges of letters and issues saying, "We are going to do this and that", and then to see subsequently this exchange in the press, a leaked letter challenging another agency about their failings, it does make me feel uncomfortable with this approach.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): OK.

Len Duvall AM: I am pleased with what you are telling me today but maybe you could write to us.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I can write, but can I just take a quick stab at the letter business?

Len Duvall AM: Yes.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Effectively, the MPS wrote a letter to a solicitors' company who were criticising us for the delay and we rebutted the allegation that we were causing the delay. That was a letter from us back to the solicitors. That is the letter that was made public.

Len Duvall AM: Ah, right, OK.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is not my view that we made it public but I do not know who did make it public.

Len Duvall AM: OK. All right, I get that. I understand that.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It was not a letter direct from the Commissioner back to the Electoral Commission.

Len Duvall AM: No, I know it was from your legal department.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, sorry. It was not a letter from us to the Electoral Commission.

Len Duvall AM: It was to a third party.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It was to a third party.

Len Duvall AM: All right, I get that. I understand the third party is considering legal action against the MPS over this issue or the failure of the progress in terms of this issue.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Len Duvall AM: OK, I get that and I am glad to be corrected that there is another potential source of those issues. I stand by that the content of the letter is still not the same and I do not believe, and I do not believe any of these Members [believe], because there has been no occasion that I can ever go back to of you, Cressida [Dick] or even her predecessors at this level, the senior management board, ever misleading this Committee. What the Commissioner was telling me was the truth as she was told it and where it was. I am very glad that you have repeated that today in terms of the officer that is overseeing the investigation at the moment. There is still a problem here of why this occurred.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Len Duvall AM: We would like to hear in a bit more detail about how you could do that.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): OK. Susan.

Susan Hall AM: All right. I am very aware that we are short of time --

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): No. You have been patient. Have your say.

Susan Hall AM: If I could just go back to the Brexit planning and just make a comment, when we leave the EU on 31 October [2019], can we make sure that there is planning in place for dancing in the street, street parties and joyous exuberance from millions of us? Thank you.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): On that note, we will move to the last set of questions, on facial recognition. Sian, you have been waiting patiently also.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you very much, Chair.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): We moved this item over from the last meeting, did we not? Carry on.

Sian Berry AM: At the last meeting we were awaiting the publication of the valuation by Essex University. We thought we would revisit it again today and it turns out that it is also quite timely.

The first question I have for you, Deputy Commissioner, is: have you now released your technical evaluation report on your trial of facial recognition technology?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): No, we have not released it yet.

Sian Berry AM: When will you release it?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I do not know, but I see no reason why it should not be released. I do not know why it has not been released but maybe it is simply ongoing and we are still working on it. I can find out. No, we have not released it yet. I asked that question. I do not know the date when it is to be released.

Sian Berry AM: OK. We were expecting it at the same time as the Essex one, originally. If they are not coming out together, then we would expect to see it quite soon. The second question is: in the course of publishing the Essex University review, you did not exercise your right of reply on the report. What is your view of the report?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I do not have a personal view of the report.

Sian Berry AM: You are speaking on behalf of the MPS, I guess, today.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Obviously, you know there was the ethics report from the Mayor's [Policing] Ethics Panel. Then we commissioned the Essex report to give us differing views on facial recognition and I guess we have differing views on facial recognition because the Mayor's Panel report seemed generally positive, so long as it was constrained and proportionate, and the Essex report took a different tack, I think. It is useful to get different views and we await the judicial review from South Wales to see what that brings us as well in terms of a different view.

Sian Berry AM: I asked at the 3 July [2019] meeting here whether the MPS would again use facial recognition technology now that the trial had finished. Mark Simmons, the Assistant Commissioner, said:

"We have stopped current work on facial recognition in terms of active operational use of it so that we can take stock of where we are."

The Deputy Mayor said:

"We have been clear that there should be no further use of any of the technology until the five recommendations [of the London Policing Ethics Panel] have been addressed, and that does also include a review of the two reports."

The second report she was referring to was the technical evaluation.

Can you confirm you are not using it currently on the streets? I have eye-witness reports of facial recognition marked vans out on the weekend at the pro-democracy protest that took place after the prorogation of Parliament.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We do not have vans marked 'facial recognition' and we are not deploying facial recognition in the streets.

Sian Berry AM: I am quite well aware of what a facial recognition van looks like and I have had the van described to me that passed through Trafalgar Square. Can you confirm it was not used at that pro-democracy protest?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We have not used and are not using facial recognition. It was a pilot. It was used on 10 occasions. The last one was in Romford many months ago and we are not using it.

Sian Berry AM: Can you just try to track down and confirm what that van was that people saw there?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Sorry, if you want to write to me with the details, I can have it looked at.

Sian Berry AM: Sorry, Steve, just to be clear, it did say 'facial recognition' on it. That is the report that we have had. No one was inventing that. I will endeavour to get you some evidence of what people saw and if you can explain that evidence to me that would be very useful.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I may not be able to explain it to you, but I am telling you that we are not using facial recognition on the streets of London.

Sian Berry AM: OK. That is good to know.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We stopped when I said we would stop. Romford was the last one we did.

Sian Berry AM: That was the final trial that you did. OK, that is good to know but obviously it is very worrying to have heard these reports from Saturday.

At the 14 May [2019] Police and Crime Committee meeting, the Commissioner was asked about the potential compilation of facial recognition watchlists based on protests and protester images captured on the streets and asked whether anything other than custody images were being used to compile watchlists for automated facial recognition. She, like you did just now, expressed some kind of surprise that I should even ask this but she did promise to write with more information and I have not had any reply to that yet. Can I chase that up via you today? If you have any information, you can give it to us.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Sure. I will make a note of that. I apologise you have not had that.

Sian Berry AM: OK, great. My final question is that the judgment has now come out on the judicial review (JR) of South Wales police trials of facial recognition. This concludes these trials were possible under the law as it stands, based on the fact that they were used for a limited time and for specific and limited purposes in each case, as a trial. This judgment is being appealed by Liberty. The JR against your own MPS trials is currently under a stay because you are not using it. That is why I was so interested in whether or not you have used it again on the streets.

Can we expect, though, in light of the judgment today, that you might start redeploying it, or will you wait, as promised at the last meeting, for the full evaluation to take place of the two reports?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): What we are waiting for is first the JR from South Wales, which we are interested in. I do not have the information you have so I did not know that. We are waiting for a full evaluation of the reports we are talking about. Most importantly, we are waiting to make sure that Management Board has a proper discussion about how, where, when and if we will deploy facial recognition on the streets of London.

I have to say - and it is appropriate to say because we do not want to be hiding anything from you - that my view is that facial recognition should be deployed on the streets of London so long as it is done within a legal framework. The JR may be saying that there is a legal framework, and I have not seen it so I do not honestly know. We have approached the Home Secretary to say that if it is not clear, we would like clarity on facial recognition. The Commissioner has said that on many occasions around the legislation or use of it.

We would also pay a great deal of attention to and be bound by what the sample of 1,000 Londoners said. Of those, 83% or 84% were happy that it be used for serious crime but increasingly less so for minor offences. That is pretty much where we are in that proportionate use we think is the right thing to do. To ignore a technology like this is not only folly but probably pointless.

Sian Berry AM: Yes, it definitely needs regulation and oversight.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We completely agree.

Sian Berry AM: Potentially, as ethical tests are very hard to meet, particularly for serious crimes where the consequences of misidentification - and we await your technical report - are much more serious.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We accept that.

Sian Berry AM: Those two sets of balances are in conflict with each other.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I accept that entirely. I would say though, just for the interest of Members, we have a strong view that the levels of accuracy reflected in media reports, including the pilots we have used, have not been accurate themselves. The accuracy is significantly higher than has been reported.

Sian Berry AM: Obviously the Essex [University] report challenged effectively the denominator of your accuracy figures, so there are conflicting views there as well.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I have a number of scientists who disagree with that, but there we are.

Sian Berry AM: Turning to the Deputy Mayor, I do not know if you have any further comment to make. Your comments last time were quite clear. We still do not have the two reports. The Commissioner is reported today in as saying in Sydney, I think yesterday, that we do need to be careful that we do not sleepwalk into what she described as "a ghastly Orwellian omniscient police state". It essentially seems to be crying out for some regulatory, ethical political direction on all of this. Are you and the Mayor preparing to offer her that, bearing all the evidence that we have seen in mind?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is why we asked the Ethics Panel to have a look at this. I absolutely agree with Steve in terms of having to look at the technical report and the evaluation of that but we have also agreed with the Mayor that there will not be any further use of facial recognition until the recommendations of the Ethics Panel have been addressed. On top of that, the Mayor has already written to the Government to ask for legislation, regulation or proper standards around the use of facial recognition and will continue to lobby for that. I have not seen the JR either and I will have to take a look at it, but we will still need a really clear framework. I think that is what the Commissioner was asking for in her comments there.

When the Biometrics Commissioner produced their report last year, he or she - I cannot remember who it was - said that there needed to be clear standards around the use of live facial recognition, and the Home Office agreed with that and said they would work to put those guidelines in place. They are not there and so we will continue to lobby for that.

Sian Berry AM: OK. Thank you.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Chair, can I just be clear on one thing, though? Our view is that there should be clear national guidance, whether it is legislation or some other form, around the use of facial recognition live-time by the police service. We are completely up for that but once that is in place the view the Commissioner has, which I want to echo here, is that it is an operational tool and will be deployed on view of the Commissioner, so long as the guidance is there. We are taking baby steps here at the moment.

Sian Berry AM: You have been quite clear today that while we have not finished our evaluation it will not be used and that will be reassuring for some people to hear.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): No, sorry, I need to be clear here. If the JR - and I have no idea what it says - is saying, "Actually, you can go ahead", then that is a different matter because if the Home Office refuse or say, "You do not need more guidance, you do not need more legislation", then we will be faced with a situation of having to go ahead. We would prefer guidance.

Sian Berry AM: With respect, the assurances we were given last time were based on the publication of the evaluation of the two reports --

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, I accept that.

Sian Berry AM: -- which we still do not have, and the ethical tests, not on any other legal case. Hopefully those assurances do stand given the conditions that the MPS set at the last meeting.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I was probably trying to offer you more assurance. What I am saying is that if the JR says that the legislation currently is OK and we go through the test you have just talked about, then we will feel free to go ahead if we think that is the right thing to do. We just need to wait and see how the Home Office responds in terms of whether there is clarity right now or not.

Sian Berry AM: OK. We will be keeping a very close eye on anything that occurs on our streets.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I am sure you will.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Fine. On that note, can I thank our guests for attending today and for their answers to our questions?