

Unmesh Desai AM

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

4 October 2019

Dear Unmesh

LIVE FACIAL RECOGNITION AT KING'S CROSS

As you are aware, in August King's Cross Central Limited Partnership stated publicly that it had previously used CCTV with live facial recognition capabilities within its estate. The Mayor expressed concern on behalf of Londoners and therefore wrote to the Chief Executive of King's Cross Limited Partnership asking for more information about how exactly the technology had been used, as well as reassurance that the Partnership had been liaising with Government and the Information Commissioner's Office to ensure its use was fully compliant with the law. On 4 September, it subsequently transpired that the Metropolitan Police Service had shared facial images with the Limited Partnership between 2016 and 2018.

As a matter of urgency the Mayor asked for a report from the MPS on this concerning development. The report set out to investigate and conclude what information had been shared and with whom, as well as whether any other similar arrangements had existed with other private companies. The MPS has now provided the subsequent report, which I attach in full for your benefit.

I have been informed by the MPS that, to the best of its knowledge and record keeping, there are no other examples of images having been shared with private companies for facial recognition purposes. In total, the MPS believe that seven images were shared between May 2016 and March 2018, when the sharing ceased.

The Deputy Commissioner has apologised for misinforming the Mayor and the Assembly. The MPS has explained that on this occasion, because the agreement was a local one at the Borough level, the central team within the MPS provided an answer which they believed to be true, but which had not taken into account this local decision making. Looking forward, the MPS has written to all BCU Commanders making it clear that there should be no local agreements on the use of live facial recognition.

You will be aware that Assembly Member Sian Berry had previously received a written answer to a Mayor's Question about the exchange of images between private sector organisations and the Met for use in facial recognition. Upon receipt of the information regarding King's Cross, the Mayor immediately amended the relevant MQ (MQT2019/14214).

More generally, the Mayor and I are committed to holding the MPS to account on its use of emerging technology such as facial recognition; balancing the interests of law enforcement and the safety of Londoners, with the rights of individual London citizens. The MPS' trial of live facial recognition has rightly been scrutinised by the London Policing Ethics Panel (LPEP) and the Mayor and I have been very clear that we will continue to work closely with the MPS and ensure the panel's recommendations are addressed before any further deployment.

As the use of facial recognition is a national issue across police forces, the LPEP report also recommended that the Mayor should lobby Government to strengthen regulation of new technology in this field, which is something that we continue to argue needs proper foundation in primary legislation and statutory guidance. People's consent is important, and proper rules and safeguards must be in place over the storage of facial images. All of this makes the case for national legislation and regulations all the more powerful to set a clear framework for the use of this potentially intrusive technology.

Once again, I would like to pass on the MPS' apology for this particular error in terms of providing factual responses to Mayor's Questions from the London Assembly. I have copied this letter to the other members of the Police and Crime Committee and all other Assembly Members.

Yours sincerely



Sophie Linden
Deputy Mayor for Policing And Crime