

LONDONASSEMBLY

April 2025

Police and Crime Committee

This document contains the written evidence received by the Committee in response to its Call for Evidence, which formed part of its investigation into public order policing.

Contents

Chris Hobbs/ Ref No.001	2
College of Policing/ Ref No.002	3
Metropolitan Police / Ref No.003.....	4
Metropolitan Police Federation (MetFed)/Ref No.004	11
NetPol/Ref No.005.....	11

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

Chris Hobbs/ Ref No.001

Former Special Branch officer and public order columnist for Police Oracle
Received 12 November 2024

I've attended just about every major public order protest/event in central London since 2018. This includes every national pro-Palestinian protest and counter protest plus several local ones. This also includes the NHC. The policing has always been even handed and serious disorder is a rarity as are injuries to the public. Despite the emotive issues, in respect of the Palestine issues, policing has contributed to the lack of physical confrontations. Both sides, however, have frequently complained that policing has been 'heavy handed' or 'two tier.' The Notting Hill Carnival statistics look horrendous in respect of murders, reported crime and attacks on officers. However, it's easily possible to attend Carnival and not see any violent issues. What can be seen is the generally excellent relations between revellers and police and frequent occurrences of officers tending to those who have 'over indulged' or become injured in some way. The recent Tommy Robinson rally which attracted around 15,000 and the anti-racist counter-protest which attracted around 5,000 were held in close proximity to each other but saw little disorder and no clashes between the two sides; no credit for police however. In relation to football, I've observed policing outside grounds. Again, at high-risk games, police have to work hard to keep two sets of confrontational fans apart. Normally the police tactics are successful but occasionally two sides clash which result in ugly scenes. The myth, perpetuated by the far- right, is that police will frequently draw batons and assault innocent, law-abiding fans. I could go on at length in respect of this topic but if you are serious in your examination of this subject you can view my features/reports published in the Police Oracle magazine. All my articles are free to view; simply search on "Police Oracle" and "Chris Hobbs". I am a retired police officer and was heavily involved in public order policing during my service, although much has changed since then.

For comments re the NHC see above. I must stress however, that the biggest threat to life and limb at Carnival is crushing. I had a bad experience at the 2023 Carnival and was extremely cautious when attending the event back in August.

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

College of Policing/ Ref No.002

Dear [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] has passed your email to me as I have responsibility for public order policing within the College. [REDACTED] passed it on shortly after you sent it so I must apologise that it has taken me a while to get back to you.

The issues that you raise in your letter are broadly aligned with those that we are exploring at the College. We are particularly interested in national capacity, the use of current tactics (including legislation) and the wellbeing of officers and staff during this period of high demand. We are currently in the process of surveying all forces on these and other topics and we have asked for responses by 11th October. We are also working with HMICFRS in support of the rapid review that the Home Secretary has commissioned under s.54 of the Police Act. I know that the Inspectorate are looking closely at capacity and capability with an emphasis on the resilience and wellbeing of officers. The methodology of HMICRS includes a 'deep dive' into several forces including the MPS, so there will no doubt be some useful findings within their report.

With all of that work in progress, it is a little early to draw any firm conclusions and whilst we have some preliminary views at the College, we are waiting for the objective analysis of the surveys and the initial HMICFRS report before we embark on any action.

I appreciate that this is slightly behind the timeline that you are operating to, so if there is anything we can assist with in the meantime then please let me know. Otherwise, we will of course be happy to share our findings once the evidence base emerges from the work we are currently undertaking.

I hope this is helpful but please don't hesitate to get in touch if there is anything further we can do to help.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

Metropolitan Police / Ref No.003

PCC Meeting – Public Order Thematic

Q: What is the structure of the Met's public order policing operation? Could you provide a breakdown of officer and staff numbers by operational area, as well as how many vacancies currently exist within public order teams?

MO6 Public Order & Resourcing Command

MO6 is located at Lambeth HQ, in the same building as the Special Operations Room (SOR), which is where pan-London command of events and major incidents takes place. MO6 is responsible for the MPS response to events and major incidents. This includes engaging with event organisers and partners to provide a comprehensive policing plan for events including ceremonials, football and other sporting events, community events, festivals and protests, marches or demonstrations.

MO6 is responsible for providing command and resources for pre-planned and spontaneous operations, ensuring a capability to mobilise resources at short notice and coordinating the provision and receipt of Mutual Aid via NPoCC. MO6 also manages officer rosters and duties, organises warnings for officers to attend training and monitors resource capacity across the organisation.

MO6 provides training to officers to assess, command and police events, and respond effectively to disorder, at the Public Order Training Centre in Gravesend.

Each of these functions is set out in more detail below:

	SLT	Co-ordination*	Resourcing Hubs	Emergency Preparedness & Business Continuity / HQ**	Ops & Training***	Public Order Crime Team	TOTAL:	Vacancy
Chief Supt	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	
Supt	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Det Supt	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	
Ch. Insp	6	-	-	-	-	-	6	
Det Ch. Insp	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

Insp/D et Insp		2	3	3	3	2	13	1
Sgt/D et Sgt		10	12	5	14	6	46	3
PC/DC		39	48	12	90	28	217	33
Band D		5	-	-	1		6	
Band E		66	44	4	5		119	14
Other staff						8	8	1
TOTAL:							421	53

*Co-ordination includes Business Support, Pan-London Hub incl. officer safety training, Real Time Resources Desk (24/7) and Central Public Order Co-ordination Team.

**Emergency Preparedness and Business Continuity and Headquarters function.

***Includes Ceremonial, Sporting Events/football, Festivals and Gravesend Training Centre.

Emergency Preparedness and Business Continuity

The EP&BC Team takes the lead for the design, implementation and embedding of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) across the Met. Together with LAS and LFB trainers, they deliver training to Police, Fire, Ambulance and Local Authority Tactical & Operational supervisors likely to command an incident in London.

The Business Continuity team administer plans for multiple departments within the MPS, ensuring minimal impact should there be a threat/risk to business as usual, such as IT/infrastructure/severe weather/health event, etc. They ensure plans are tested regularly, and units are prepared for unexpected events, with contingency plans in place.

Real Time Resourcing Desk

The RTRD provides the Met with an overview of its resource capability at any given time, indicating skills availability, resources currently booked on duty, what they are tasked with, and their capacity or suitability for a change of deployment. This provides resource management information for senior decision makers to interpret and advise on the delivery of urgent/spontaneous Aid requirements (mobilisations).

When required, RTRD will instigate the mobilisation, sending notifications to B/OCUs and monitoring compliance; reinforcing the message if required and preparing mobilisation de-brief reports. The RTRD also creates, manages and reviews the location based comments and special schemes on the Command-and-Control system on behalf of investigating officers and contingency planners.

Roster Unit

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

The unit is responsible for roster planning and CARM (duties system) administration activities for approx. 43,000 officers and staff within Frontline Policing, Specialist Crime, Met Operations and HQ OCUs. The unit consists of a Roster planning team and four administrative teams, dealing with monthly moves and changes across OCUs. They implement the renewal and updating of over 16,000 rosters and 200,000 changes to officers in the CARM system each year.

Resourcing

Central Resourcing manages, monitors, records and distributes the number and type of abstractions demanded from B/OCUs on a daily basis. It evaluates which B/OCUs are best placed to deliver the demand with the least impact on day to day delivery of Met business as usual. They also liaise with NPOCC for national public order commitments and mutual aid request.

The Resourcing Hubs follow an Aid hierarchy model when using officers for Aid, and maintain staffing levels by backfilling where required. The Hubs aim to ensure that any changes to an officers' duties cause them minimum disruption, whilst still achieving the best value to the organisation and complying with police regulations.

Public Order Planning

This unit plans and delivers proportionate policing plans in response to events in London which go above and beyond the capacity and capability of BCUs. In the year to October MO6 supported the planning and management of over 1500 centrally managed events. They liaise closely with event organisers and attend safety advisory groups to work in partnership to delivering safe events.

Public Order Crime Team

The Team is responsible for delivering the crime plans for major events including, New Year's Eve, Notting Hill Carnival, major football fixtures and other sporting tournaments, major protest and state events. Their responsibilities include: the provision of an appropriate investigative capability, the design and management of charge centres and forensic teams, as well as cell allocation and prisoner transport. The Team also has responsibility for investigating crimes. This includes any major disorder such as football and protest related violence.

MPSTC (Metropolitan Police Specialist Training Centre)

This unit provides an environment for realistic public order training. There is a series of interconnected streets to provide an urban training environment including a mock tube station, stadium and crowd simulator to provide additional training flexibility.

The team also deliver specialist training courses for public order officers, commanders, medics, forward intelligence teams and evidence gathering teams. They train officers in rapid entry

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

tactics (entering a building at speed) and dealing with uncooperative people inside a house. The team also train police officers and staff to work at height using ropes and cradles for hostage negotiators, CCTV engineers and some firearms officers.

Q: A breakdown of the cost of public order policing related to each of the following categories respectively: Protest, ceremonials, festivals, football and sport (non-football) to the Met. Please provide this information over the following financial years:

Year	£ Costs*
2016-2017	11,123,233.90
2017-2018	12,015,792.80
2018-2019	9,114,178.95
2019-2020	35,217,449.04
2020-2021	14,569,196.74
2021-2022	19,122,306.06
2022-2023	74,437,354.53
2023-2024	43,515,954.70

This reporting is not able to provide the data by specific event type, only the total budget spends over each financial year. A number of Home Office grants were received by the MPS across several of these years. This includes: 2022/23 - Operation London Bridge (circa £59m additional spends), 2023/24 - Operation Golden Orb (circa £9.8m additional spends) and Operation Brocks (circa £16.2m additional spends)

The Met's Force Management Statement provides more detail on types of demand by different types of event - [Force Management Statement 2023](#), p 135.

Q: What training do officers receive in relation to public order policing? To what extent does this include training on the use of new legislation?

Training follows [the guidelines set](#) by the College of Policing.

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

We also delivery Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which includes updates on new legislation. These are mainly delivered via CPD days to Events & Major Incident Foundation (EMIF) courses, as well as the Cadre cohort. These updates are also delivered to L2 and L1 officers through the yearly cycle or mandatory refresher training. All new recruits receive L3 training which includes an input on legislation.

NB: All police officers, including recruits, receive public order training at Level 3. Officers can volunteer to undertake more training in order to police demonstrations, football matches and large scale events, etc., which is known as Level 2. Specialist units such as TSG and MO19 firearms receive the most advanced training at Level 1.

Additionally, we provide cohort briefings to update on legislation and other keys updates. These are delivered in a range of formats including written briefings, virtual sessions and our public order portal. Legislation knowledge is also refreshed on the Bronze Cadre annual refresher courses on a personal basis.

Q: Could you provide data on how many minutes were officers abstracted from local teams in London to specifically assist with policing the following categories : Protest, ceremonials, festivals, football and sport (non-football). Please provide the information for the following financial years:

The attached spreadsheet provides details of the number of shifts. We are seeking to increase the number of officers used on aid from outside BCUs to help maintain neighbourhood and response team numbers and reduce abstractions.

Please note we can only provide data in relation to officer shifts not minutes, as our resourcing system does not hold that information.



Aid
abstractions.xlsx

Q: Could you provide data on the amount and the cost of mutual aid received from other police services outside the Met, related to public order policing, across the following financial years: 2018/19; 2019/20; 2020/21; 2021/22; 2022/23 and 2023/24?

Year	Costs received
2018/19	£0.00
2019/20	£5,884,362.77

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

2020/21	£292,030.43	
2021/22	£274,674.26	
2022/23*	£12,710,739.73	* incl. £12.5m Operation Bridges
2023/24*	£6,978,638.25	* incl. £1.8m Operation Golden Orb
	£24,280,789.52	

Q: How many officer rest days have been cancelled due to public order policing over the last 12 months?

We are not able to report on easily as our resourcing system does not hold that level of detail. To provide this information would require a manual count of a number of different systems.

Q: How many times have the following offence/powers included in the Public Order Act 2023 been used by the Met since they were introduced? Please provide any further context on the use of these, including data on whether any of these new offences were used to make proactive arrests.

Q: When and where have the Met authorised and used Section 11 powers related to stop and search without suspicion?

Public Order Act 2023

New offences in Sections 1 and 2 related to locking on and being equipped to lock on	12
New offences in Sections 3, 4 and 5 related to tunnelling	0
New offences in Sections 6, 7 and 8 related to obstruction of major transport works and interference with national infrastructure	723
Powers in Sections 10 and 11 related to stop and search, and stop with and without suspicion, linked to protest-related offences	Section 10 - 12 in relation to locking on. Section 11 - Authority given on 3 occasions resulting in 49 searches*.

*The MPS moved over to the Connect recording system on the 28th February. Any stops between 20th December, when the legislation came into force, and the 27th February would have been recorded on Crimint, which is unable to provide this information.

Q: Has the Met issued any written statements to individuals related to stop and search without suspicion, as allowed for in Section 13?

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

There are no known occasions when this has been used within the MPS.

Q: Has the Met made any applications to a magistrates' court for a person to receive a Serious Disruption Prevention Order (SDPO)? If so, how many applications have officers made? On how many occasions did this application lead to an SDPO being granted?

There are no known occasions when this has been used within the MPS.

Q: How many times for each of the financial years (2021/22; 2022/23; 2023/24) has the Met made use of the below powers? Please provide further context to use of these powers (e.g. which specific protest were they used for, what conditions were in place and how long for)?

Public Order Act 1986

Section 12 of the Public Order Act 1986, imposing conditions on public processions.	37
Section 13 of the 1986 Act, allowing an application to prohibit public procession for up to 3 months	0
Section 14 of the 1986 Act, imposing conditions on public assemblies.	61

*This data covers 2023 onwards.

Q: How many times in the last 12 months was noise used as a reason for issuing a Section 12 order?

There are no known occasions when this has been used within the MPS.

Q: How many times for each of the financial years (2022/23; 2023/24) has the Met made use of the below offence? Please provide any further context on its use: Section 78 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 to "intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance".

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

Public Nuisance	
Youth Demand	79

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

Just Stop Oil	97
TOTAL:	176

These offences relate to a range of incidents including the blocking the M25, disruption to Pride 2023, disruption to Pride 2024 and disruption to the State Opening of Parliament.

Metropolitan Police Federation (MetFed)/Ref No.004

Hi [REDACTED],

Thank you so much for the invitation to the London Assembly this week, it was great to be given the opportunity to voice concerns over Public Order commitments in London.

I quoted some stats from PFEW Pay & Moral survey that seemed to resonate with the panel, please find [enclosed the full results that are relative to the MPS](#), if you would be so kind as to circulate to other panel members it would be appreciated.

If I can assist further, please do not hesitate to ask.

NetPol/Ref No.005

Dear [REDACTED]

London Assembly Police and Crime Committee: Investigation into public order policing

Thanks you for you email and your offer for Netpol to participate in the hearing on 9 October.

There is unquestionably an urgent need to “explore the state of public order policing in London,” particularly in the wake of mass protests in the capital against Israeli genocide in Palestine. Netpol has worked extensively on the policing of these protests and I have enclosed a copy of our report “In Our Millions”, published at the end of May, that summarises our conclusions to date.

However, it is unclear how Netpol can meaningfully contribute to a Police and Crime Committee investigation whose terms of reference and key questions are so narrowly focused the ‘efficacy’ of controlling protests and on costs.

Our work is about defending human rights but the underlying assumption of your investigation is that protests are primarily a nuisance that has “impacted” negatively on the Metropolitan Police. This accepts without question that the most pressing concerns about the state of public order policing in London are how well individual officers are trained, and how well-funded the Met is overall, to deal with the perceived inconvenience of protesters.

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

However, the right to protest is not simply a nuisance or an inconvenience – it is a fundamental human right and provides an essential function for expressing opinions within a democratic society. The terms of reference offer little opportunity to address equally pressing concerns about the negative impact of policing on the exercise of this right.

Let me summarise briefly some issues the Police and Crime Committee may wish to consider.

The use of new police powers

You have asked about the efficacy of new powers to police demonstrations introduced in 2022 and 2023. However, long before this the police already had ample – Netpol would argue, far too many – powers to restrict rights to freedom of assembly for political demonstrations. More important than efficiency has always been whether a wide range of often sweeping powers are used lawfully.

The further expansion of police powers since 2022 was intended to give senior officers even more tactical options that might potentially become useful and convenient at some point, rather than what was genuinely needed and thus reasonable or proportionate (the usual standard for human rights compliance). For example, the government pushed vigorously ahead with a noise ‘trigger’ for imposing conditions on protests in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Court Act 2022 but since this provision came into force, it has never been used.

In March 2023, Netpol also asked the Metropolitan Police to provide details on arrests for breaching any kind of restriction on a protest because a protester “ought to have known” it had been imposed (another new offence: previously the police had to show a person had deliberately ignored them). It said that to “the best of their knowledge” no arrests had ever been made¹.

In addition, recent legislation has criminalised the methods by which serious disruption might potentially take place, rather than focusing on the actual degree of disruption a protest could lead to. The Public Order Act 2023 created a number of these new offences, including ‘locking on’ to another person or an object as part of direct action or civil disobedience tactics, which criminalises not just the effect of a lock-on (e.g. obstructing the highway), but the act of locking on itself.

In every instance, none of the new powers were genuinely necessary to address gaps in existing legislation: there was already wide-ranging public order laws in place for all these kinds of activities and under previously existing laws, arrests were made and charges were brought. Nobody who had ever ‘locked on’ during a protest prior to 2022 ever had any expectation that they would not face arrest and in all likelihood, prosecution.

This is significant to your investigation because its focus is on new powers, but what Netpol has seen instead with the numerous mass Palestine protests in London has been a reliance by the police on established powers, used in a more unyielding and uncompromising way. Examples are documented in our “In Our Millions” report. They include:

¹ See Freedom of Information Request Reference No: 01/FOI/23/029036, March 2023, <https://netpol.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Met-Response-March-2023.pdf>

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

- a rigid adoption of restrictions on marches and demonstrations, through advance imposition of section 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act (1986) that is wholly disproportionate to any realistic prospect of serious public disorder
- the widespread misuse of powers to compel people to remove face coverings under Section 60aa of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994), which despite lobbying for the extension of these powers led to a low number of actual arrests and even fewer charges
- an unjustified use of Section 35 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014), which gives powers to the police to disperse people where there is a likelihood of disorder or anti-social behaviour (harassment, alarm or distress) arising from a gathering, in circumstances where repeatedly this threshold was never reached.

All these are longstanding police powers that unacceptably curtailed freedom of assembly. The issue over the last year has not been about how well police officers understand and are trained on the use of recent new legislation.

Abstraction and over-policing London demonstrations

Abstraction from local neighbourhood police teams to deploy thousands of officers in central London for public order policing was a choice made by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, in our view to placate demands from the media and government ministers for an aggressive to so-called “hate marches”. This continued long after it had become obvious that Palestine solidarity marches posed little meaningful threat of disorder.

There were one or two notable exceptions to this involving counter demonstrations – primarily the genuine risk and subsequent arrests of 89 far-right demonstrators on Armistice Day, almost a third of all the 305 arrests between 14 October 2023 and 31 March 2024. Police had ample intelligence about this far right threat but in the case of 11 November 2023, decided to discount it (Assistant Commissioner Laurence Taylor briefed journalists that he had “no issue with a group going to Whitehall in order to protect the Cenotaph. They will not cause serious disorder by themselves”)². Our contention is that this was because the Met was more concerned about pressure from ministers to crackdown on Palestine solidarity demonstrators and this was the only reason hundreds of officers were moved from other duties.

Of the remaining 216 arrests up to the end of March 2024, out of the millions of people who marched in this period in protest against Israel’s genocide, no further action was taken in 136 instances. The evidence to justify the huge numbers of officers that were deployed simply does not emerge from the number of arrests.

Netpol argues that the Commissioner chose to abstract officers from local boroughs to protect the Metropolitan Police’s reputation from criticism, not because it was necessary. Once again, this is why the lack of focus on human rights obligations in your investigation’s remit hampers the Committee’s deliberations – the Metropolitan Police Commissioner must justify not only the costs and impact of abstraction but why these choices were made and whether they were reasonable and proportionate.

² See <https://x.com/lizziedearden/status/1723296574728487412>

LONDON ASSEMBLY

April 2025

Measuring success and failure

The investigation asks for feedback on how the Metropolitan Police can “change the way it polices protests to better serve all Londoners” but it is impossible to answer this without a benchmark to measure success or failure – one where ‘all Londoners’ does not immediately exclude ‘all protesters’.

The metric for success for senior police officers has always the same: whatever is most operationally convenient to limit the scope of protests and the most politically convenient to prevent criticism from ministers and the media. That is precisely why senior officers lobbied successfully for a dramatic expansion in protest-related police powers.

However, another measure is whether the police are routinely complying with, or even vaguely attempting to address, their legal obligations to both facilitate and protect people's fundamental human rights to freedom of assembly. Your investigation mentions, in passing, “protecting the democratic right to protest” but there are no key questions asking how this is assessed.

There is, however, plentiful evidence that the Met is repeatedly failing in its legal obligations – from the High Court decision that it acted unlawfully in creating an effective London-wide ban on Extinction Rebellion protests in November 2019; the controversies over the policing of Black Lives Matter demonstrations in 2020, the Sarah Everard vigil in 2021 and arrest of demonstrators during the coronation in 2023; to the aggressive policing of recent Palestine protests.

Many of the campaigning organisations who have marched in London since October 2023 are amongst those who have given their support to a human rights based benchmark that Netpol has developed – the Charter for Freedom of Assembly Rights³. This could assist the Police and Crime Committee if it decided to significantly expand the remit of its investigation to include human rights as well as funding and police morale considerations.

In light of the severe limits on the scope of your investigation, we must respectfully decline to take part in a public hearing, but we hope these observations are helpful. We urge you, nevertheless, to considering widening the remit, as any credible exploration of the state of public order policing in London must include its human rights considerations.

With regards,

[Redacted signature]

Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol)

[Redacted contact information]

³ <https://netpol.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Charter-for-Freedom-of-Assembly-Rights.pdf>