

London Assembly (Plenary), 9 December 2014**Transcript of Agenda Item 4:
Question and Answer Session – Policing in London**

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can I welcome the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, and the Commissioner of Police, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good afternoon.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Good afternoon.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): They are here to answer our questions. Can I invite you first of all to make your opening statement?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Roger. Yes, I am just going to be very brief and remind the Assembly that on all the key things, the performance of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and generally of the criminal justice system in London is extremely good. Crime is continuing to fall. You will remember that we had a target to reduce seven key neighbourhood crimes by 20%. Those are down currently by 18%. I think I am right in saying that last year crime fell by 4%. Members of the Assembly should know that this means that crime is now falling faster in London than elsewhere in the country. The average in the country as a whole last year was just 0.6%. We have seen particularly impressive reductions in burglary and in theft from the person.

There are of course continuing challenges. We need to get on top of violent crime - I am sure we will be discussing that. We are looking at one of the reasons for the violent crime figures; although the crime figures are generally satisfactory on violent crime, we are seeing some figures that need explaining. I am sure that the Commissioner will be giving a good account of them. We are recording good work on homicides, they are generally very low, they are at historic lows and that is very, very encouraging indeed.

Police numbers are high. They are currently at 31,434 and we are continuing to recruit very rapidly. Two thousand officers have joined this year alone and, as I said to Londoners ages ago and said right through the campaign in 2012, we will continue to ensure that there is a Safer Neighbourhood Team in every ward.

Finally, as I am sure Members of the Assembly will have seen, this morning we were able to announce a highly successful deal to dispose of the property New Scotland Yard for development. I congratulate Kit Malthouse [AM] in particular for his wisdom. I am sure he would not in any way wish to disown the credit for this.

I am sorry. Does anybody else claim any credit for this? Oh the Assembly. Oh, Mr Biggs [John Biggs AM], I am sorry. I thought it --.

Kit Malthouse AM: It had to go through the Finance Committee --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I see, well, Kit, there you go. A proud success such as this has many parents and I am sure we will all want to be shining in the reflected glory of Kit's decision to borrow £120 million for New Scotland Yard back in 2008 and now enabling us to dispose of it for £370 million, leaving a very considerable chunk to be invested in policing in London.

Without further ado, I would be very happy to take your questions. Unless, Bernard, you want to add anything to it.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Probably just to amplify points rather than add an awful lot.

First of all, we have got falling crime and rising confidence. I am proud of the people I lead. They still do a difficult job. It remains a challenge to police London. We have nearly achieved the MOPAC seven crimes 20% [target to reduce seven key neighbourhood crimes by 20%] within these first three years, but there are challenges for the next few. We have seen an increase in the amount of counterterrorism work, which has been expressed in the media over the last four months. That has led to over 30 arrests. We have said that the drumbeat of terrorism has changed over this last period with links to Syria and Iraq that we have seen playing out on the streets in this country, which means that that produces its own pressures. We have talked to Government about how we should be resourced to deal with that pressure. All of these cases are difficult, whether it be the surveillance needs or the digital evidence recovery needs. Each one of these cases puts an awful lot of pressure on the system. Obviously we are reassured by the fact that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has charged in the vast majority of these cases. It is not only the suspicion leading to the arrest, it is also the fact the CPS has then thought it fit to charge and we shall now have to await the outcome of the court appearances.

We have seen this reduction in budgeting coming up to £600 million. We are about three-quarters of the way through that. Despite that, we are the only force in the country that will keep our police officer numbers high. By the end of March we will be back at around 32,000. It might be 31,900. As I speak it is about 31,400, so we are rising to that high water mark.

The big thing that we are all concerned about is obviously the announcements from the Chancellor, even over this last week, which shows that clearly the public service will still need to take a significant reduction in spending. That will be regardless of which government, or regardless of which combination of parties form that government. Our estimation is that this is towards the top end of what we expect, which we think will be something approaching £800 million. The combined total of £600 million and £800 million is £1.4 billion and that is going on toward nearly a third, but certainly at least a quarter, of our spending and that is a very significant challenge. I am not saying it is different to other public services, I just observe that for us it will be a significant challenge. We have some plans to deal with that. Of course, until we see the exact numbers we cannot be sure, but it will mean that we all have to be very careful in how we spend our money.

Secondly, we have to work across borders in a way that we have not before perhaps. When I say 'across borders', I mean across emergency services. With other local authorities, we have to be more radical in some of our ideas, not just stick with the arrangements that we have.

Finally, obviously we are going to expect more productivity from the people we employ. Our investments that we will make from the capital we are gaining from the buildings, that will be really helpful. If you remember that capital is earmarked. I say that because it could be that people are looking with greedy eyes at this huge sum of money that is accumulating to the MPS. Actually, as we are going to lose £1.4 billion this will help fill that gap to some extent. It is not revenue but it will help us. There are two things we have it earmarked for, which is improving the awful state of some of the buildings we have and also improving the information technology (IT), which will enable our officers to work more efficiently and help the public better. They are the important things we need to spend this money on. This is not going into a slush fund; this is stuff that we need to spend money on. It will also help us, frankly, to deal with the gaps that will develop in the next few years, until the economy turns around, and we can expect more spending on public services. It is a way of buffering and sliding into a better agreement, so it will be really helpful to the MPS but we do need it.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Great. You have moved some way towards dealing with the first question on the agenda there as well. I am not going to take any supplementary questions on the initial statement, because I think that first question is broad enough to cover pretty much anything. Some of the other issues you have raised are further down the agenda.

We will move on to the questions which are tabled. The first one is Assembly Member McCartney's question, which is about the demands on the MPS budget. Mr Mayor?

2014/4962 - Meeting London's Current and Future Policing Needs

Joanne McCartney

With ever reducing budgets can the MPS meet current and future policing needs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I really want to echo what Bernard just said. I think it is a very fair summary of the position. Clearly there are going to be continuing demands for economy from the Treasury. We are going to have to make the case for London. We have been here before. This was an argument that colleagues will remember we had four or five years ago. We were successful in getting funding to meet the needs of the city. I appreciate very much what Bernard says about his determination to continue to take out costs and obviously we will try to be as useful as we can. However, my view is that if you are going to police a growing city properly, a city whose population is going to grow just in this decade probably to 9 million people, if you are going to keep police out on the beat in the way that everybody around this place wants to see them then we are going to have to make the argument for proper funding for policing in London. That is part of the purpose obviously of the Mayoralty and of my role as the occupant of MOPAC.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Thank you. It would be helpful if Members, when asking questions, could make it clear which of the witnesses you want to answer so that we do not get doubling up. Assembly Member McCartney?

Joanne McCartney AM: My first set of questions are actually for the Commissioner, if I may, and I have some for the Mayor following that.

Thank you for the comments about the Autumn Statement and the difficulties financially that the police are going to have in the future. A couple of weeks ago the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime talked about drastic and dangerous police cuts which will have to happen. You have talked, I believe, today, and I have certainly had reports from ITN, that it would be difficult to maintain the 32,000 police officers on an ongoing basis. Could I just ask if that is something that you recognise, that with the 32,000 you may be able to get there by the next election, but beyond that it is going to be very difficult to maintain?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have to accept it is going to be very, very difficult because we have found £600 million of savings and got to that 32,000 and that has probably made an awful lot of the 'easier' savings, none of them being easy but easier savings, so we have done that work - over £5 million. The next group, which will be another at least, I suspect, £5 million will require far more effort but we have probably got some good ideas about how we might save one-third of it and that still leaves two-thirds to be found. As you know, 80%-odd of our costs are people. By far the most expensive of our people are police officers. If you break down our workforce, two-thirds are police and they account for three-quarters of the salaries. Those numbers drive you to realise that we will struggle to maintain those numbers. I will put it stronger than that, because until we get to the point of knowing exactly what we will lose, no matter which government, then it is hard to be precise.

We are driving down our police support staff costs. That also means losing some police staff. We have gone down from about 14,500, we got down to about 11,500. That as a ratio of police to police staff support has changed. We have managed to make that change. There is a point at which, and we have always worried about this together, if we reduce our police staff numbers to the point where we have to replace them with police officers, then that makes no sense, and I have always said I would not do that. I have the support from the Mayor and Deputy Mayors to say that we would not do that. I do not know when that day arrives, but when you have taken 3,000 away it has to get closer. For all those reasons it is obvious that we are going to come under real pressure.

We have asked for support around counterterrorism and we are waiting to see what will happen there, because we have not had a promise yet on that. Even if we see overall pressure we have to see some investment there. I cannot put it any better than it will be difficult to maintain 32,000.

Joanne McCartney AM: I think we have had this discussion with you when you were first appointed, and I know the Mayor said this as well, that 32,000 is about the right number to actually police London effectively. Is that still your view, and particularly with the Mayor's comment about the city expanding even further. Is 32,000 the number you would want to keep?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I would love to keep them and double them really. There is no perfect science as to how many we should have. If you know the MPS had 25,000 15 years ago, now at 32,000, there is no precision about it, that it should be 31,000, 33,000. We could argue all day. To be fair though, if you look at territorial policing (TP) there has been a really good piece of work done in the MPS, which I did not lead. It was led by Simon Byrne [Assistant Commissioner for TP] and his team, which showed that the number of officers we have in TP is broadly what we needed at the time to police on TP, from responding to incidents and investigating crime at the volume end. It is harder on the murder side and kidnapping.

That is broadly about right, but the things we know that are coming down the line with this next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) is obviously London is growing, which is a fantastic thing, more people. With more people, on the whole, there becomes more crime, more challenges. You are seeing differential birth rates, you are seeing the East of London expanding at different rates. There is no doubt that this city is going to produce its own challenges and we would always want to have more officers. I am afraid I cannot be precise about what the exact number is that we always require, but 32,000 is not a bad one to have.

Joanne McCartney AM: The Deputy Mayor for Police and Crime has previously stated to a House of Commons Select Committee that if it went below 31,000 it would be a doomsday scenario. I do not know if he still holds to that.

I want to move on. You talked earlier, Commissioner, about the gaps which will develop in the next few years. The last time you had your Deputy Commissioner in front of the Police and Crime Committee he talked about the fact that even now you are having to make trade-offs. If I could quote him he gave the example, he said, for example:

"In rape we are seeing large increases. Where do we want to do the trade-offs? This is where we are getting to."

Therefore if you put money into one part of policing you have to take it away from the other. Do you recognise your Deputy Commissioner's view that you are getting to trade-offs? If things do not improve, where do you see the trade-offs being made?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am not sure exactly the question that Craig [Craig Mackey QPM, Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] was answering, but I can anticipate some of the areas he was thinking about. For example, the fact that we have less murders of course is a great thing, but when we looked at it we have not changed the number of murder teams, whereas on the other side we have seen a big rise in the number of sexual offence reports. Some of those are historical. We knew that we needed to help the sexual offences investigations so we put, I think it was, two to four of the murder teams over to sexual offences.

Joanne McCartney AM: My question really is, is there anything you are thinking that you might stop doing in the future?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): No. I am going to answer that question directly. We just put 500 officers into cybercrime. We have had to move them from elsewhere. You could say that means that you are having to make hard decisions. We are, but that is what criminals are doing, so we have to follow to some extent obviously what the nature of the threat is. I do not anticipate stopping doing much. I have been in the job now for 30-odd years and we have been talking about stopping a lot, but do not ever stop these things, we still carry on doing them. What you can see is you sometimes have to prioritise by time and it may be that we have to limit the amount of resources we put into some things. I think it is very hard for a police service to say, "We are going to stop investigating things. We are going to stop attending things" but I think you have to do that and then prioritise. It is not going to be anything left that we just say we do not do. I do not see that is a need. Even with the levels of cuts we are talking about we are going to have to probably just delay some things, but to some extent that happens now.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you. My question now then is to the Mayor, if I may. When the cuts to policing were first announced three-odd years ago, there were reports and in this Chamber many people warned that anything above a 12% cut to policing would affect the frontline. You said then that the MPS could make 20% at that point without affecting the frontline. I think we have seen the frontline being affected by those 20% cuts.

Mr Mayor, can I just put it to you that we have heard about the risks to the future. Is it fair to say, do you believe, that by the time you leave office you will have left London's policing in a bit of a mess financially --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On the contrary.

Joanne McCartney AM -- with a major black hole and a very difficult job for the next Mayor to actually fill?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, on the contrary. What we have shown is that the challenge to reduce costs by 20%, which is what we said as part of the MOPAC challenge was 20% reduction in crime and 20% reduction in costs, we are on target to do that. Crime is down by 18% --

Joanne McCartney AM: I am talking about finances, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- as I have said, and there have been very substantial savings indeed - including, by the way, the announcement that we made this morning. They are being accompanied by great gains in efficiency which are leading, as I say, to our ability to do more with less. That is obviously what we are all about. We have been able to rationalise the estate and save £240 million last year. The target saving is £234 million for 2014/15 and we are confident that the MPS will come in under budget by the end of the year.

Your point, and I think Bernard's point, is really about the future, beyond the election, beyond the election in May next year to what is likely to be the situation in 2016/17, what is the budgetary position then. That is something we have experience of. We have been here before. We were faced with what we were told were

going to be the most swingeing cuts in history in 2010 and we went in to fight for London and we were able to secure a very good settlement. I have no doubt that we will be able to do the same again. We have been here before. The arguments for investing in policing in London remain as strong as they have ever been.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Commissioner. Good afternoon, Mayor.

Commissioner, can I just talk to you about police response times? I can see from the tables which MOPAC has provided to us that the emergency response times of the police across London for the past two years have slipped in the wrong direction, particularly for Category S, which is the 'respond in one hour', and Category E, which is the 'respond to within 48 hours'. Second and third priority response times have gotten worse. I notice this particularly because it has affected my own borough; Southwark have lost 5% of their Category E response time and I think London wide it has slipped from 93% to 76%. There are some big slippages on this. Why do you think this is happening and is there anything you can do to remedy this?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): There are two things. First of all the numbers that you did not mention were the emergency response times, where in fact the target has gotten quicker and our performance has got better. We have moved now to 90%-odd of the calls we are getting to on time, where there is an emergency which is a life-saving event, or alternatively there is an offender at the scene. I think we would all agree that those things are the most important.

There is no doubt during these last couple of years, because we have seen a couple of thousand off the height that we are getting back to the 32,000 that some of those pressures of vacancies have fallen to the response teams and so, therefore, the prioritisation has meant in some areas we have seen some drop off from the one hour [response time]. I cannot remember the numbers now but we can discover this for you. It is not an awful lot longer than the hour that we are getting to them. Those are the cases where we think it is a reasonable response time. On the whole we are doing pretty well on all our responses to the, now I think it is about, 4.5 million telephone calls we get a year.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Yes, I take the point. I am talking about the second and third priority issues. Of course third priority, things like follow-up to burglaries are very important to public confidence. Do you think that the slip back on the Category E-type calls has anything to do with the fact that the local police teams are overstretched?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not think so. What you could see as an effect—obviously we have changed our local policing model and that has taken some time to bed in and we have acknowledged that by having a review. There were two things. One is that people are working differently, so we are expecting the neighbourhood teams to answer some of those calls as well as leave them entirely to their response colleagues. The second thing is, as I said, the vacancies that were discussed, we know that the policing model was not fully staffed and would not be until we get to this March period when we expect to see it fully staffed. The combined effect of that is really what has led to the situation you described.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Earlier in the year you said to my colleague Joanne [Joanne McCartney AM] that you were looking at reviewing the local policing model. Is this an issue that is in the pot for discussion?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Is what, sorry?

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Is this an issue under examination and discussion? Can you recover the response times for the second and third categories?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Oh sure, yes, because, as I say, as we fully staff up each of the units then that is entirely possible. It just means that we are going to have to work harder and slightly differently when we have got the resources in place.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: By which time do you think you will manage to recuperate the response times?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I would have thought between March and June then we should see those back up to the full level that we have experienced before. We always knew, since I have been here, is if you remember what happened was we had to find £600 million of savings. The only way to do that was not to recruit. We could not recruit until we had identified the savings. It took us eighteen months to identify the savings. We have now started recruiting so I expect those are the things that will now start to improve again.

As I said, in response to Joanne [McCartney AM] it is not that we stopped going to things, you just have to prioritise when you are low on resources, which we were across the force at that time.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: You are not looking at changing those target times then?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): No.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: No, OK.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It seems to me those are reasonable ones.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: That you want to stick to if you can?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: I understand that the vision for emergency response teams was that they would also spend 30% of their time dedicated to visible patrolling. Is that being squeezed as well?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): No. We will find out the exact answer if you want one, because it is hard to measure, as you might understand. Generally, response officers should be out there responding to the calls. That is their job. The only thing we do find, obviously if we do not get the bureaucracy right and the IT right they spend too much time at the police station recording the things that they have been dealing with, so I think that is the only pressure we have seen particularly. I would not expect the visibility for the response clocks to have changed drastically.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: OK, thank you.

Murad Qureshi AM: Could I ask a few questions now on front desks and contact points? We have seen the closure of three police stations in the residential part of Westminster, that is, north of Oxford Street. That is, the Howe Road in Paddington, Marylebone Station in Seymour Street and St John's Wood Police Station in New Court Road. Why has there been no front desk replacements, Mr Mayor? Could I ask the Commissioner, has the MPS forgotten that people actually live in Westminster?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not want to comment in detail on what provision there is because I have not looked at what has been put in place of the police stations that you mentioned, Murad, but the general principle, as you know, is that we are moving with the times. The times require that members of the public who are victims of crime, who want a police officer to come to them, will be attended by a police officer.

That is why you have the figure, a huge number, of calls that the MPS fields every year and a huge number of personal visits. That was the pledge made by the Commissioner. I think it was entirely right to do that. That is the way forward. That, by the way, reflects people's habits, it reflects the needs of Londoners today. Fewer and fewer have been visiting police stations in the old fashioned way and it made sense to go ahead with that reform. By the way, I think that if you are seriously going to argue that we should go back and spend a fortune keeping those police stations open then you need to explain exactly how the funds would be raised to compensate us for the loss of revenue.

Murad Qureshi AM: Mr Mayor, that has not been suggested. I am just reminding you that you made a pledge that no front counter would be closed without equivalent or better provision being found.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said, I cannot give you the particular about the arrangements in those neighbourhoods because I have not had notice of that particular question.

Murad Qureshi AM: They are very distinct neighbourhoods, believe you me.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would be very happy to supply whatever details to you.

Murad Qureshi AM: Commissioner, the MPS, has it forgotten the residents of the residential parts of Westminster?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I will not answer that question directly, because I am not sure I know how to. You know that Westminster is fairly unique, if not unique, as a borough. We are always trying to balance two things, well probably three things in Westminster. On one side we have the central Government, we have the West End and then we have the people who live there. That is their home, they live in those two areas. Not too many in the former area but quite a lot, obviously as you know, in the north of the borough. It is always a challenge as to how we get that balance right and there is no sort of answer to that. We are also trying to provide a service as a contact point for all the tourists and all those people who visit, as well as the people who live there. Trying to strike that balance is difficult. With a bit more notice probably I could have given you a better answer with where we are in terms of finding the right contact point for north Westminster. If you feel it is taking too long then I am very happy to take that away and look at it.

Murad Qureshi AM: Commissioner, I do not disagree with you about the City of Westminster and policing there. It is more like Manhattan than any other London borough. That has always been a premise I have worked on. Given you have mentioned contact points, both myself and the local MP, Karen Buck, have been raising issues about the contact points. They seem to be limping along and I think the MPS's own review of contact points say they are not fit for purpose and they do not offer value for money and their mandatory opening times fail to take into account local demand and demographics.

Do you think it is unreasonable for the residents of Westminster to expect the equivalent or better service that you promised, Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To the best of my knowledge they are getting a better service, in the sense that they are being attended to when they are victims of a crime or when they wish to make contact with the police they are being attended directly, and that is the way forward.

Murad Qureshi AM: Mr Mayor, you can say that but I can give you instances where people have been burgled and whereas before they have gone to a local police station they have ended up going to the other end of the borough in Belgravia to pursue their insurance claims. I am not sure that is offering the residential

parts of Westminster the service that they may get in other parts of town. That is the premise of my question. Can I also move on to --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you have particular evidence of people having to travel a great distance to get to police station, obviously we will look at that. As I said in my earlier answer, it is difficult for me to describe the kind of provision that people have in that part of the city off the top of my head but we would be more than happy to come back with greater detail.

Murad Qureshi AM: Can I finally ask: you once said you wanted "bobbies not buildings" and, as I have mentioned earlier, you have sold all the buildings in Westminster and we have also seen fewer police officers, to the extent of --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is simply not true.

Murad Qureshi AM: We have seen since May 2010 a quarter of the police force reduced in the city. Is the situation likely to get any better or worse, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The situation has been extraordinary, in the sense that London, as Bernard said earlier on, has totally bucked the trend of every other police force around the country in that we have kept the numbers high.

Murad Qureshi AM: That is the same with Western Europe, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Neighbourhood Teams - we have put another 2,600 out into neighbourhoods by next year. They will be going out by 2015. Two thousand officers have been taken from the back office into the frontline. That is what I think Londoners expect to see. You have heard what Bernard has had to say about reforming the local policing model. If there are ways we can improve the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams, the balance, the mix, the configuration then obviously we will do that. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The seven key neighbourhood crime types that we identified at MOPAC, you are seeing them come down.

Murad Qureshi AM: I am finished, Mr Chairman, but we will just see what he does with Paddington Green Police Station.

Tom Copley AM: I want to raise with you the issue of tenants who were threatened with eviction from MOPAC-owned homes, some of whom were in fact evicted. I was pleased to see that the vast majority of those now will not be. Your Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime [Stephen Greenhalgh], who I see has just joined us, having reversed his own decision to evict people.

I raised this with you back in March, the whole issue of tenants being evicted from Raynesfield in Wimbledon. Why did you not step in then when you had the chance, rather than sitting back while some families have been forced to move and others have had the threat of eviction hanging over them? What do you have to say to those families at Griffiths Road and Raynesfield?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you will know, you decided collectively as an Assembly that you did not wish to talk to Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Stephen Greenhalgh, who could perfectly well have come and answered detailed questions on that, which do not figure of course in this case.

Tom Copley AM: I am sorry, you are the Mayor, the buck stops with you, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To the best of my knowledge I think what has happened is that obviously the MPS is not in the business of owning properties. It is not a landowner, that is not our core competence, that is not what it does. It was right to find a way of disposing of these homes, but as I understand it the evictions have been stopped and that is all to the good. It will obviously be up to a future --

Tom Copley AM: Mr Mayor, I have raised with you, and indeed other Assembly Members have raised this with you earlier in the year, you could have stepped in. It seems that you still do not seem to know what the full situation is, despite the fact that really the buck stops with you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, I do need to correct you, it sounds as though we have stepped in.

Tom Copley AM: Do not start shouting, Mr Mayor. This is --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was not shouting.

Tom Copley AM: You were, you were raising your voice. Stephen Greenhalgh has said --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It must be a very loud microphone.

Tom Copley AM: -- Stephen Greenhalgh has said:

"I was not happy with how they had been treated and I was not prepared to see key workers like nurses, carers and teachers, forced to move out of their homes.

Why were you not happy with the way they were treated when you looked into their case after I questioned you back in March?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Suffice it to say, that I approve wholeheartedly of whatever Stephen Greenhalgh has done to protect these tenants. I would stress it does in no way --

Tom Copley AM: You don't appear to know what he has done. Will you apologise?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- alters the fact that we had to dispose of these properties and it will ultimately be up to a future landlord to work out how those tenancies should be proceeded with.

Tom Copley AM: Will you apologise to these residents, particularly those that were evicted, for not taking action in the end, which you have not done?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I will happily accept your congratulations, if that is what you wish to offer --

Tom Copley AM: There is not an offer.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- for the humane and wise decision of Stephen Greenhalgh.

Tom Copley AM: I do not see why. This is ridiculous. U-turning your decision to evict people is a bit like someone coming up to you in the street threatening to mug you and then saying, "No I won't" and expecting you to pat them on the back for it. It is absolutely preposterous.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Right, I am sorry, but I completely fail to see the analogy. It sounds to me as though Stephen Greenhalgh has stepped in to prevent the eviction of these tenants.

Tom Copley AM: Which he was proposing, Mr Mayor. He signed off the Estate Strategy!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course it will be up to the future landlord, who may well be a registered social landlord, or whoever, to decide how to proceed.

Tom Copley AM: Utterly preposterous. He made the decision in the first place.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What he cannot do is to continue to be in the business of being landlord. The job of the MPS is to police London and to bring down crime and that is what we are doing.

Tom Copley AM: I do not know if you saw the press release that MOPAC sent out, announcing this U-turn, which frankly looked like it had come from the Conservative Party central office, plastered with local Conservative MPs and including your colleagues.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you are just cross because we seem to have shot your fox.

Tom Copley AM: Hang on. No mention of the work of Councillor Andrew Judge [Merton Council] in Wimbledon.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you feel -- This is a pathetic indignation of the Labour Party. You cannot stand the idea that somebody else might be activated by feelings of clemency and decency.

Tom Copley AM: Can we stop the clock, thank you, Chair.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The people who write the verbatim minutes of this meeting can only write in one column. They cannot write you both down next to each other, so can you have a go at speaking one at a time please?

Tom Copley AM: Thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): I think Mr Copley was in the middle of asking a question.

Tom Copley AM: I was.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): You complete first and then the Mayor goes. That is how question time works. OK?

Tom Copley AM: I thank you, Chair. Yes, there was no mention of Councillor Andrew Judge in Wimbledon, no mention of the work of Andy Slaughter [MP for Hammersmith] or Councillor Hannah Barlow in Hammersmith and Fulham Council. Are you content that MOPAC is sending out press releases that certainly sail very close to the wind when it comes to being party political?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think we have now got to the bottom of the matter, through you, Chair. This is the howl of pain from a Labour Assembly Member who discovers he has been completely out-generated by the masterful Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, who has not only done the right thing and the merciful thing but it also turns out has done something that has effectively shot Labour's fox that they were so avidly chasing. It was obviously a grievous oversight (I am being sarcastic, for the benefit of the recorders). In an ideal world in all MOPAC press releases it would pay tribute to all --

Jenny Jones AM: You are talking gobbledygook.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He has specifically asked for MOPAC press releases to pay tribute to the work of Andy Slaughter and some chap whose name I cannot remember.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): We have stopped the clock, as we seem to have exhausted this particular subject. Assembly Member Tracey.

Richard Tracey AM: Yes, thank you Mr Chairman. It is rather an opportune moment for me to come in, Mr Mayor, because in fact when the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Stephen Greenhalgh, went to visit the tenants in the Raynesfield Estate, I was with him, as was Stephen Hammond, the MP for the area, for Wimbledon. I believe, may I say, that Stephen Greenhalgh listened with some compassion to the people who were in that estate and then reached his decision. For Tom Copley [AM] to give us a load of rubbish about the press release - the press release was perfectly factual.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You know [Tom] Copley wanted the press release to include a reference to himself and to Andy Slaughter. Who was the other chap? I cannot remember. Anyway, some Labour guy. It seemed to me to be wholly irrelevant.

Richard Tracey AM: I think you are probably right actually when you say that it shot the Labour Party's fox in the area. May I ask the question that intended before we had this outburst from Tom Copley?

Commissioner, on the question of the costs of policing London, I think MOPAC has said, and I think probably the Inspector of Constabulary has pointed out also that the cost per head of policing London is probably about twice as much as the average for the rest of the country, and that is even taking out the cost of the national responsibilities which you have. I believe that there has been a drive on between yourself and MOPAC to try to bring down that comparison to get nearer to the national average. How are you getting on with that?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is certainly quite near. I do not have the exact figures. One thing that has slightly concerned me, or actually concerned me a lot, when we saw the last set of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) figures their comparisons did not properly, I do not think, account for the difference in spending in London - for example, salaries. We have a difference in salary of about £6,000, thank goodness, to the rest of the country but they did not obviously show that. It did not account for the fact that when 10,000 people turned up outside the Israeli Embassy we still have to have 1,000 people to respond. One, from the demand side and, two, from the cost side things like the value of the estate. The very thing that we are getting a benefit from, we also get costs from. When it comes to building new buildings or maintaining them and all the rest of it.

Yes, I have always believed that benchmarking and comparing with other costs is good, and when I was in the HMIC I did exactly the same. I do not think it is true to say that it is double the cost, and it has certainly got better. We will never, I doubt, get to parity. I would love it but I think it is always going to be unlikely, so we have to settle on a figure that we think is reasonable. We may be travelling towards that but there will be a consequence.

Richard Tracey AM: The figures that we have, £366 per head, is the London figure. The national average is £192. There is quite a bit of difference there. I accept what you said about, for example policing some problems outside an embassy, that is presumably to a large extent part of your national responsibility, is it not?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is but it is all contained entirely within London. When 1,000 people turn up outside the Israeli Embassy, as it was, and it is not the only

one we have had over the last few weeks, the officers who police it will not come from a special pool marked 'diplomatic protection' they will come from Croydon, Lewisham and Hackney, right across the force area. We have to have enough resilience in the 32 boroughs to cope with those, not unusual but, exceptional days when we have to provide those extra numbers in large amounts. We are the only force in the country that has a Kidnap Unit, for good reason. We are the only force who has such a large dangerous dogs unit. That is a more minor example, but important for the reason we may go into talking later. There are many things that we do here that are exceptional and we are never going to be Norfolk and we are never going to be the City of London, come to that. I think it is important --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Our air will be as clean as Norfolk.

Jenny Jones AM: Not with you as Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It already was. Indeed the other day they had an air -- anyway.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): OK. This is deviation. Commissioner, please continue.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not think I have an awful lot to add. It is entirely proper to aspire to reasonable comparisons. We are showing that we are getting nearer but there are always going to be some differences. Some of that is the cost base and some of that is the demand base. The final thing is some of the extra responsibilities we take on for the country that land here and no one else wants to do.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Just to give you one example, Dick, the cost of Julian Assange [Editor-in-Chief of the website WikiLeaks] so far in policing the Ecuadorian Embassy, between June 2012 and the end of October 2014 was £7.3 million. That is one example of the kind of costs the MPS faces.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): The funeral of the Baroness Thatcher [former Prime Minister], which we were pleased to police very well, but I think was something in the order of about £3 million in cost, for which there was no reimbursement. Of course it went off well but everybody forgets there was a significant threat to the protest that we expected that could have led to a national event and become a national disgrace.

Richard Tracey AM: You do have my respect. I have listened with horror to some of the doom mongers who were going on two or three years ago about what the state of policing would be in London. It is interesting that in the last few days, one of your colleagues, a chief constable I think in the north who was saying that in two or three years his force was going to go bust. Equally, a police commissioner in Surrey a few weeks ago was saying more or less the same thing. He had sold a whole lot of police stations and still he believed he would not be able to balance the budget without charging an extra supplement on the Council Tax. Are you in any way fearful in the same way as them, or are you more confident?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Probably if I said two or three things further really. First of all, I am not a person who will react to somebody saying, "Save money and be more efficient by waving shrouds". I spent three years, when we had to find £600 million to get the police numbers right, so if I say I am getting concerned it is because I am getting concerned. That is how I would phrase it at the moment. Another £800 million professionally I know is going to be a challenge and I have tried to put it in that way. I am not quite sure how we do that and keep police numbers. We will go away and look hard. We have already got some ideas but there are going to be some harsh realities. Do we continue with 32 command units based on 32 boroughs? Do 32 boroughs continue? Do we continue with the number of ranks we have? All these things are being considered now for the future, I would assure you.

Secondly, it was Lincolnshire, and if you look at what is happening, and the reason that they are having a particular challenge is because they were already very tight and they had already gone and outsourced things that are, frankly, things I would not have outsourced. They have outsourced their call handling, they have outsourced their custody handling. There is not an awful lot left to drive, by commercial pressure, their cost base down. I think it is in that sense that their Chief Constable is starting to get very concerned. He would say that the grant formula does not recognise the realities of policing Lincolnshire, which is very rural, very sparse and they have got not very many officers spread thinly. That is their broad problem. I respect their problem.

Coming back to my final comment, I am concerned about what the future holds if we only count our operations by numbers. If we only worship police numbers, and we have already seen examples here, where people only want to talk about police numbers, it happens every political cycle, then you can expect that this will be a challenge over the next four to five years, no matter which party is in power. As you know, depending on which side of the fence you are on, depends on which way that will be played. All I can say, if that is all we worship, then we have a problem coming along and, I am not somebody to wave shrouds, I just think that we have challenges.

Richard Tracey AM: OK, thank you.

Andrew Dismore AM: A question for the Mayor, really. I want to pick up from where Sir Bernard left off on the issue of abstractions.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Andrew Dismore AM: In February 2013, Sir Bernard told the Police and Crime Committee that he had set a target of no more than 5% of officers' working time on abstractions, but in July of this year, total abstractions across London in terms of total of hours worked was 17%, more than three times the target. What that translates to is quite serious. In Barnet, for example, in the six months to September, on average we lost no fewer than 87 officers a month's shifts, or 22 officers missing at least one shift a week from their normal work. In Camden we were losing 25 officers for one shift per week over that six-month period. The real problem is that we just simply do not have enough officers, compared to where we were in 2010. In Barnet we are 65 fewer officer compared to May 2010, 110 fewer Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), in Camden 214 officers fewer than in May 2010 and 79 PCSOs less. The fact is we abstractions because you have not got enough officers to go around, have you not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Look, Andrew, I share your concern about abstractions and I think that the figure of 17%, if that is one that we can stack up there, that does sound unacceptable. I certainly agree with that and I know it is a big concern to borough commanders across London, and I know it is a big concern to the Commissioner. It is a reflection of the central role of the MPS in the policing of this country. If you want to hold a big summit in Cardiff, or whatever, then there is going to be MPS police involved. The MPS is absolutely integral to policing in this country. It, in my view, strengthens the argument that we should be asking for proper support for the MPS and for keeping police numbers high in London.

I repeat my central point. I hear what Sir Bernard says about not making a fetish of one number or another but you have to go for some sort of target and that is why we have gone for at or around 32,000 and that is what I believe in. The result of that, sticking with a policy of keeping the numbers high has been that we are able to get police out into the neighbourhoods in the way that we have done, and that is showing up in the reductions in neighbourhood crime.

Andrew Dismore AM: Right. The point about it is it means that the numbers that you put out as the numbers of officers on the boroughs are not accurate because they are being taken away.

Let us move on. I want to ask you about closed circuit television (CCTV).

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Andrew Dismore AM: Do you think CCTV is important in combating crime?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do and I think there is an increasing issue, Andrew, about CCTV, and it is one that we discussed only yesterday in the London Crime Reduction Board. We need to have a strategy for the funding of CCTV across the city. There is a great variety of CCTV. A lot of is obviously borough CCTV, some of it private. This is of huge value to the MPS and we would be very careful that we do not allow that vital crime-fighting resource to be degraded. I am also anxious about that.

Andrew Dismore AM: I agree with you about that, so can I put this to you? Are you prepared to pay Barnet Council £800,000 to maintain Barnet's CCTV service?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All councils make a case to us and to the MOPAC about the need for us to fund their CCTV. This is something that is obviously vital for councils to continue to do if they wish to provide safe streets, if they wish to provide a good service for their citizens. We cannot go around, frankly, offering to write colossal cheques for CCTV across the city, as you will probably understand.

Andrew Dismore AM: Exactly. I think I would agree with you about that. The problem is Barnet, at its Community Leadership Committee on 10 November stated, that the proposals in their plan mean, "Moving to a nil revenue contribution to CCTV services from the council". At the end of the current contract they are not going to pay for it. I think that is entirely wrong and I think from what you are saying you would agree with that proposition.

Can I move on to private CCTV now?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My view is very simple. CCTV is also developing the whole time, by the way, and it is becoming much cheaper and more effective and the data capture is becoming faster. Indeed all members of the public are now equipped with their own CCTV cameras, as you know, so crime fighting is changing.

Andrew Dismore AM: That is what I want to come on to next.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Individual officers are now increasingly equipped with body cameras.

Andrew Dismore AM: Let me put this specific case to you about private CCTV then. On 23 November Mr Littaur in my constituency in West Hendon was sat at home watching the television and three armed men sledgehammered his front door, burst in, pinned him to the floor with the sledgehammers and tried to demand where his valuables were. He managed to escape over the back fence, phone 999 for the police, who eventually arrived. He had them all on CCTV, not just the assailants, but also what looked like the vehicle that they were using.

Mr Littaur's comment is this, when it came to dealing with the local police investigating it, "It must be easier dealing with the Keystone Cops" was his comment. It took them the best part of a week to download the CCTV. If they'd acted quickly they might well have been able to catch those people because he had CCTV in his house. It took them forever to -- they eventually took his machine away. They took it back, they did not fix it up for him. He was quite seriously injured, obviously traumatised and he is very dissatisfied with the way the police responded to this burglary.

The point I want to make is about burglary more generally in Barnet, and that is this: Barnet is the most burgled borough in London at the moment; 243 break-ins in August, September and October, according to the RAC Home Insurance. Even the council in their *Committee Strategy Assessment* says this, "Barnet has one of the highest per 1,000 population rates of burglary in London". The answer that you gave me at the last Mayor's Question Time was only 3% of burglary offences are detected by clear up charge. It is perhaps not surprising when my constituents get a response like that, is it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Before you accuse the police of being Keystone Cops I think you --

Andrew Dismore AM: That is what he said, that was the constituent.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you would want to reflect on those words, Andrew, and --

Andrew Dismore AM: They are my constituent's words, not mine, that is what he thought not what I said; what he thought.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You obviously dissociate yourself from those words?

Andrew Dismore AM: I am putting to you what my constituent asked me to put to you. That is the point.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. You either associate yourself or disassociate yourself with those remarks.

Andrew Dismore AM: I am putting to you what my constituent asked me to put to you. That is what he thinks of the response he got from the police.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not what you think, obviously?

Andrew Dismore AM: I am asking for your opinion on it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Just checking, OK. My view is that the police do a fantastic job. I am obviously very sorry to hear about that particular incident and I am sure that we will be looking at what happened in the case of Mr Littaur and making sure that we try to do better in the future. Clearly private CCTV is also extremely valuable and it sounds like a great shame that it was not possible to get the information faster.

Yes, I fully accept that Barnet has had a problem with burglary, though I would remind you that burglary across this city, and this is something worth shouting about, is at its lowest for 40 years. At its lowest for 40 years, and that is a considerable credit to the MPS, because burglary flares up and then the MPS, with the Neighbourhoods Teams they do Operation Bumblebee, they do all sorts of initiatives and they are able to drive it down. Some of the transport networks into Barnet do seem to make it particularly vulnerable to burglary. There are people who come in opportunistically and seal in that area. I know that in that part of London they are doing their level best to tackle it. I don't know if you want to add anything --

Andrew Dismore AM: The point about it, Mr Mayor, is this. In the year January to the end of October this year there were 2,938 burglaries in Barnet. That is an awful lot, even compared to September, that is an increase of nearly 800 in just one month, according to the numbers you gave me from the previous month. The fact is that the number of burglars who are actually charged is just 3%. Just 3%. That shows something is going wrong with those investigations, and I have given you an example of just one. I accept that is just one you will want to look into, but if that is typical of what is going on it is not surprising. The problem is this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not typical. I have just given you the figures that show it is not typical.

Andrew Dismore AM: Let me finish. Just wait for the question. The point about it is this: you have changed the system to the local policing model. It has been investigated through the local policing model and it is quite clear that the officers involved in the local policing model, the local detective constable (DC) and so forth, simply are not doing the job properly. That is the problem in the local policing model. I hope that when you are reviewing it this is one of the things you will look at, whether in fact the detectives doing the job are doing the job properly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I would hesitate for a long time before casting any general aspersions on hardworking detectives in Barnet or elsewhere. If there has been a failing in this particular instance of Mr Littaur, then obviously that is something that I am sure the Borough Commander, I am sure Sir Bernard will be wanting to look into. I repeat the overall point, yes it has been an issue in Barnet, but across London the struggle against burglary has been extremely successful and it is at its lowest for 40 years.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Chairman, just very quickly because I know it has been covered quite well, but there were quite a few things run together there which, to some extent, are linked but I am not sure entirely.

The point about abstractions, when we talked about abstractions before, it is a bit like good and bad cholesterol. Bad abstractions are in fact the ones who you might regard, if you are in the Borough of Barnet and people have to go to Westminster or somewhere else to help other people, unless of course you want the help, in which case you regard it as good. Therefore, what we are trying to do is we are trying to minimise those abstractions in various ways, which I will not go through this meeting about. What I would regard as the good cholesterol is that some of the abstractions are down to training, for example. I often come to meetings like these and people say, "You're not very good at crime investigation". There is only one way to remedy that, is to continually train. That accounts for some, but even then 17% I would want to check that figure, which I will go away and do.

Andrew Dismore AM: It is your figure.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): The second thing you talked about potential for the police, for example, giving £800,000 to Barnet. That means 16 police officers' salaries, if that is what you want to do, in which case that might well be a good investment.

Andrew Dismore AM: I am not saying that, they are.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): You keep reporting things that other people say, but my point is if that is what your proposal is that is what the effect would be.

Andrew Dismore AM: That is not my proposal, it is the council's.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Whether it is yours or theirs it is the same effect. If you do that for 32 boroughs on top of the £1.4 billion that will be the effect.

Andrew Dismore AM: It is not my idea.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Let me just finish. I have tried to listen to your question.

In terms of the £800,000 that was talking about a public CCTV system, then you moved to a private one ie where this gentleman had this horrible attack, by the sound of it. I will go away and look at that. We will look, because if it has taken that long and it has not worked that is not good enough and I accept that entirely.

One of the difficulties our officers have is the multiple types of formats that all these CCTV things run. Therefore, downloading at the scene is quite hard and they have to take it away. The cumulative effect to try to download lots of systems is that we either have to have lots of kit, lots of recorders and players at the police stations, which we have. If you do not have the right one you have to go and get another one. Of course, nobody has to meet a certain standard to put their own kit in. I will go away and look at this one, because if a victim has some evidence I would want to see it and we ought to investigate it. If there is evidence on there that should allow us to catch the offender then we should be doing something with it. You will get no argument with me, Andrew, about that.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Thank you.

Jenny Jones AM: Commissioner, could I go back to the conundrum about the future cuts in budgets and the increasing number of officers and, therefore, the increasing percentage that their pay will be. You have already said that pay is a huge percentage of your budget. As you increase offices you are actually brining the point at which it becomes inefficient and you are going to have to backfill officers into support staff roles, eve closer, are you not? If you stick with this what is a fairly arbitrary number of 32,000, or even what has been described as a 'fetish' for the numbers.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): All I was saying was that I was trying to explain how the future might look, as well as how the present is. We are 32,000. I am sure, so far as you can be with nearly 50,000 people, that we have not yet backfilled police staff jobs with police officers. What I was trying to explain was that in the future if we have to find another £800 million there is a possibility that will be more likely to happen and so, therefore, we are going to try to avoid that. Well, not try to avoid it, we will avoid it.

Jenny Jones AM: You have actually done the sums and you know that having 32,000 police officers will not actually mean officers backfilling in backroom jobs?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Today, yes. I see the unions every quarter and one of the things that they have talked about is, "Yes, I can give you examples where a police officer is back-filling a police staff member". I have asked them now for the last 18 months, "Give me that list of jobs and I will go look at it", and we are in the process of doing that. In a big organisation it is possible it happened once or twice, however strategically at the moment I do not believe that is happening. As you know, there are some areas we do it as a conscious strategy, in our control rooms one in four of our people are police officers, therefore when the police staff, if they should, and they have, have withdrawn their labour we can answer the phone. We have to be able to do that. Therefore there are examples like that.

On the crime scene investigation (CSI) side, the forensic scene examiners, we have some; however, frankly, if I could get away with it I would get a few more police officers, because again, if people withdraw their labour, which I entirely understand, at least the serious crime, and also I would say for volume crime, we need to be able to get there in the first hour and get the best evidence available.

Jenny Jones AM: The problem is, it is much easier to sack staff than it is to sack police officers. Therefore, when that crisis, when that inefficiency crisis hits, ie when you do not have enough support staff and you need officers there, it is too late, is it not, because you cannot sack police officers?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): In one sense you are correct. It is far easier to make people redundant; that is police employees, than it is police officers, because there is no scheme to do that. However, on the whole, we have been able to meet our needs because we have been trying to grow our police officer numbers, so it has not been an issue trying to reduce them. The big thing, the counterbalance, if you like, for the police officers is our turnover and, broadly, we lose between 1,500 and 1,800 officers a year on retirement or leaving to other organisations. The vast majority is retirement, because our turnover is about 5%. Really, for one year that is an awful lot of money; therefore, as we have over the last three years, when we returned the recruiting tap off, that is our best way of managing that cost pressure, rather than, as you say, the police staff, then we have the opportunity - if it be an opportunity - the cost is well under redundancy.

Jenny Jones AM: Thank you.

Fiona Twycross AM: I would like to ask a question about the Metropolitan Police Service's capacity to tackle female genital mutilation (FGM) now that Department of Health statistics show that London accounts for over half of all FGM cases in England, and I wanted to ask the Commissioner, given we heard last month that ten out of 12 FGM cases put forward by the MPS to the CPS have fallen, are you concerned at the ability we have to prosecute the cases and what lessons have you taken from this for the future?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): OK, I do not have the numbers in front of me, therefore I am going to have to do my best to answer your question. First of all I think the big challenge is to get it reported because we have just not seen the reports coming through, either from the victims, which is difficult if it is a child, or from those who know the victims. We have not seen reports come in from public service, from health, education, when it is clear that there is information out there that children are being treated in this way.

The same thing is, then we need to investigate sensitively, not sensitively against the suspect, however sensitively on behalf of the victim, because of course often this is arranged by parents and occasionally carried out by family members. Therefore those are the challenges.

We have the largest number of investigations in the country and we are making the most cases to the CPS and I know that the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and the head of the CPS in London are dedicated to trying to get the charges in these difficult cases. I believe we already have one charge, which is going through to court, of a medical practitioner.

Fiona Twycross AM: Yes, however I am sure you will agree, it is quite worrying if 10 out of 12 cases are not taken forward by the CPS.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It would be, and the only reason I am hesitating to go any further is, unless you look at each case, it can be that there are difficulties with the case, it could be an investigation problem, it could be the fact a witness does not come up to proof, or it could be that there is a public interest test that I am not aware of. I am happy to look at each of those.

Fiona Twycross AM: If you could look at it, because I think there is obviously a huge concern about the practice, and I think people would really like to see some of these cases prosecuted in much higher numbers. Because even the cases that have been taken forward only account for a tiny proportion of the reported incidents.

Now, the other point I wanted to raise with you, Commissioner, was that it has been suggested that, due to the growing burden on the MPS due to historical child sex abuse cases, that you are overstretched in this area generally. Do you require more resources in order to enable you to tackle FGM effectively?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am not sure about FGM. I think sexual offences generally, as I was explaining earlier, we have moved resources from, for example, homicide and other serious crime, into sexual offences generally. Because of the first point you made, the volume of reports, it is not yet I think a volume problem. I think we can cope with extra reports of FGM. What we are struggling with particularly is the historical allegations of sexual offences, and then the more recent ones. It is a good thing in the sense that I hope people are more confident to report in more of what is happening. Therefore we are going to have to seriously think about putting more resources in there, we have already put some in, and it may be we have to put more in there.

Fiona Twycross AM: Thank you. I think that one of the things I am concerned about is obviously that if you have ten out of 12 cases dropped, I mean if you look at sort of sexual offences more generally, one of the things that puts people off reporting it is if they report it and then things are not carried through, it sort of puts people off in the future.

I just wanted to ask the Mayor about the funding for your Harmful Practice pilot and obviously we welcome this and I know you were applying to the Department for Education for a further £200,000 up to 2016 for specialist social workers. If you are not successful in this bid, will this threaten the pilot or will you commit to ensuring that it still goes ahead?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not want to make a commitment now to any funding that could after all be prejudicial to any negotiations we are engaged in. That is not tactically the right thing to do, Fiona, if you see what I mean. I think we will want to continue to press for support for this vital area. We do not have the funding. I just want to say, your point about the shortage of prosecutions is a good one, however I think this practice has been illegal on the statute books since 1985 and we have, for the first time, last year had a prosecution in London.

It is an extremely difficult thing to be successful in and I think the Commissioner is right to draw attention to many of the pitfalls in delivering a successful prosecution, however we must have one because there are people who are simply getting away with it and as long as they get away with it and as long as there is not a successful prosecution for FGM then people will have a sense that it is not taken as seriously as it should be. The practitioners and those who indulge in FGM will continue to think that it is somehow connived in or winked at by people in London. That is absolutely not true. We must stamp this out.

Fiona Twycross AM: I think we can all agree on that, thank you.

Kit Malthouse AM: Commissioner, Mr Mayor, a variety of questions from me. First of all, just on the FGM one, do you have any sense of the level of resources that are currently applied to this particular issue, how many officers, is there a team of 20 or 200?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): There is no dedicated team, there is not a team sat there just doing FGM. These are dealt with by the Sexual Offences Unit, of which, as I am sure you know, of a few hundred people in that unit scattered around London. Therefore it is part of their role rather than a dedicated unit.

Kit Malthouse AM: All right, however I remember us having a conversation where I posed the question to you that, if little boys were appearing across London with their little finger cut off on a systematic basis in dozens and dozens, there would probably be a task force to try to do something about it. Do you think we merit in forming up a specialist group, not least because there are obviously other harmful cultural practices that we have talked about in the past that might deserve more focus?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is certainly something worth considering. We have not yet, but, as you know, one of the difficulties we have is that, for every one that someone like me answers a question like that and says, "Yes, we will have another unit", that means less on response, it means less on community policing, therefore getting that balance right is difficult, however it is something we should consider.

Kit Malthouse AM: I guess the question I am asking is exactly to try to tease out the level of prominence to which the offence is given. I guess part of the issue, would you say, is that the data is not entirely clear, and while there are reports from the hospitals about the number of women who present in maternity, for instance, with signs of FGM, that it is not entirely clear. I know for instance that, if people present with a gunshot wound at hospital, that has to be reported by law. Do you think there are other things, such as FGM, that should be reportable to the police, so we can at least have a true picture?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): First of all, yes, the point about should we have a dedicated unit, I will reflect on, I think it is a fair challenge and a fair question. It would have to be cut out probably from the present Sexual Offences Unit, however I think we can consider how that happens.

Second, just to reassure you, I mean certainly personally I have been committed over this last 18 months, as I have come to know more about the issue, to make sure that we treat it very seriously. Therefore we have had operations run at Heathrow where we know that there are flights, which are likely to take girls to the Middle East for this operation, to try to spot them, even though we do not have the intelligence. Therefore we have done an awful lot to (1) get reports and (2) do something about it. That includes a relationship and a partnership with CPS. Therefore I think we can show we are taking it seriously.

Then, sorry, the third part was?

Kit Malthouse AM: The data, whether you think more should be reported.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, sorry. I think part of the Government's proposals at the moment are to make it a duty for those who had information about a victim of FGM to report it and I support that. It seems to me that, it is very hard to believe, is it not, that either as adults or children that these girls and women are not going through the medical system. If anybody has medical treatment, they often have problems with infections, these are people who have been treated in circumstances that certainly are not top quality clinical conditions. They must be appearing, and we have heard cases of reinstated FGM after childbirth. Now, it must be that someone is spotting this when they are in childbirth. Our broad point is, whether it be health or education, we need those reports. We need to handle it sensitively.

The only final thing, because it is always easier for me to answer that question saying, "Yes, of course we must have reports", what we always know for doctors, they are very concerned, if someone needs medical attention they need to be confident to get it rather than worry about the consequences through the criminal justice system, and I have always respected that, whether it is a gunshot wound, it is better someone gets treated than it is that they are frightened and staying at home and not getting that treatment. Therefore I think you always have to strike that balance, but even the anonymised data would be helpful.

Kit Malthouse AM: Yes, I hesitate to pick a scab, however I am conscious that probably more has been spent on phone hacking over the last couple of years than has been spent on detecting and prosecuting FGM.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is often a thing thrown about.

Kit Malthouse AM: However I will let that lie.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Of course it did require two parliament --

Kit Malthouse AM: Just a couple of other on -- sorry.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Well you made a comment, OK.

Kit Malthouse AM: Sorry.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, it did require two or three Parliamentary Committees, one Public Inquiry, to insist that investigation was --

Kit Malthouse AM: I am not positing any of the blame necessarily on the police, however I made this point several times and was roundly criticised by other politicians for doing that.

Anyway, just another specialist unit, you mentioned dangerous dogs and I wondered, given the pressures that you are going to be under, whether you will be able to maintain or indeed increase your activity around dangerous dogs, not least because my perception is the problem is not going away?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): No. First of all, having said that, I do not think we are going to stop doing things, it has to be a risk for two reasons, it is not that expensive in terms of rosters, they have an inspector, a sergeant and about five constables, it is not big by any standards. The cost really is the cost of kennelling. Last year we spent £1.5 million on kennelling about 300 dogs, and this year it is about 350. I am told that the last 12 months compared to the previous has seen about a 20% rise in the number of dogs we have taken. To your point, it looks like we are getting more reports. The cost of kennelling is huge and we do not seem to be able to recover it. That is where the challenge lies I think. Of course the officers' salary is a not insignificant thing to think about, therefore I do not think we are taking our foot off the pedal and clearly the public are reporting it. We have seen some horrible cases where people have been badly injured.

Kit Malthouse AM: You anticipate a similar effort going forward? This is not one of the areas --

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): At the moment it is not something on our list. I mean frankly, whether we did it or we did not, it would not make any difference to the size of the task that we are embarked on with £800 million, however nobody has come forward and said, "You must get rid of the Dangerous Dogs Unit". However I think they have only been thinking about the number of officers in it. This tale of cost around the kennelling, where we should be able to recover it from the owners, however at the moment that is not straightforward.

Kit Malthouse AM: OK, the other area I wanted to ask you about was the horse, the mounted units, an area I know that is close to your heart. There has been some research recently about the effectiveness of mounted police officers, both in visibility and in terms of enforcement. In effectiveness, I do not know if you have seen the hilarious video of a motorcyclist just on London Wall, I think doing a wheelie, being stopped by a mounted police officer very effectively and dealt with. What are the plans for the mounted units going forward?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We are trebling them!

Kit Malthouse AM: Good.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): No, we are not. Whenever I am here, they were soon to get rid of them, or halve them, and we have had one or two Assistant Commissioners who do not like animals, we have moved those! However, I think there is no doubt an accountant would say, "Well what do you get out of the money you spend on horse and dogs?" Even if you redeployed about 115 officers into the boroughs, by the time you split them around five shifts we would not get much effect. I think they do have a power and every so often we need them and I think we are foolish to remove that sort of thing. However, in straight numbers, could you prove it? I think it is quite hard. We are encouraging them to do more things like get a camera on the head, they are 15-foot high, and in crowds they are able to gather evidence, and they do make arrests and they do issue tickets, however not at the rate of people who walk. However that is not where - I propose - that they have most benefit. They have a good relationship with the public, people come and talk. With those people who are involved in violence, then they are able to disturb that. We use them at football matches, like patrolling at West Ham a week on Saturday in my tour of all the football grounds of London, and they have a power beyond 200 police officers. We do not over-use it, we do not under-use it, however I think they have a value.

Kit Malthouse AM: OK, so they are not under threat either. That is great.

Then I just wanted to clarify the situation on Westminster and police stations, since Murad [Qureshi] raised it. My understanding is that Westminster will be like a Belgravia, West End Central and Paddington Green, is that right?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Sorry?

Kit Malthouse AM: The City of Westminster will have three stations in the plan, which is Belgravia, West End Central and Paddington Green, will remain.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): There is a fusion of two things. One is what was the old Police Authority, now the Deputy Mayor and Mayor, because they own the estate, how do we want to manage it, and on 16 December then the management board is seeing the latest list of proposals. That is around how far the disposals have got - we have heard about one today - and the second thing is, what are we going to do with the two-thirds we keep? Because the sad reality, as you said, there has been a lot of claiming of some of the benefits of some of the selling; however the sad reality is, over the last 50 years, there has not been much investment in the police estate. Therefore, what we are asking for is a list of what are we going to do about the old estate to improve it, do we need to move buildings because some of them are in the wrong places, and the final thing is, the two-thirds of the estate that we keep, to get them up to a good standard so that the staff who work there and the public who visit are proud of them and not, frankly, in some cases embarrassed.

Kit Malthouse AM: Therefore those three stations in particular, you are saying nothing is decided?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I honestly do not know. I think when we will have a better idea from the police perspective, because obviously there is a separation requirement, post 16 December.

Kit Malthouse AM: OK. Great, thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): All right, that concludes the first question. The second question is about the spike of violent crime in London, it is posed in the name of Assembly Member Arbour. In his absence, Assembly Member Boff has agreed to take this on.

2014/4963 - Violent Crime in London

Tony Arbour

Whilst recorded crime continues to decrease, 'Violence with Injury' (VWI) has seen a considerable increase this year. What measures are the MPS taking to reduce violent crime?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I think I indicated earlier, this is an area that we are looking at very actively and there are a number of potential explanations that I think it would be fair to say that the MPS is considering. I mean it is worth setting the context, when you look at VWI, this is not related to, for instance, stabbings, it is not related to gun crime, or rather those are not in the figures, those are both falling. Homicide continues to fall. Of the potential explanations, I think the ones I would mention include greater reporting of domestic VWI and a change in the notification, I believe, or a change in the system of notification, is one of the reasons that has been given to me for the possible explanation.

The other is simply that there is low-level violence taking place in town centres associated particularly with alcohol and the perpetrators aged typically between 26 and 41. The injuries are not severe by and large and I would stress that, although there is a spike, the levels are still below what they were in 2008/09. Clearly, it remains a cause of concern and a great deal of activity going on by the MPS to knock it on the head.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I mean you will forgive us for concentrating on this particular area because our job as Assembly Members is to see where it is going wrong, not where it is often going right. While the decline in overall reported crime is welcome, it is disturbing that we have these particular categories increasing.

I wondered if you would be supportive of the recommendations in a report published by the Greater London Authority (GLA) Conservatives in June called *On the Wagon*, whereby we wanted to see a doubling of the penalty notice for drunk and disorderly behaviour from £90 to £180. Would you be supportive of that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That sounds interesting. If that would make a big difference to this kind of crime I would certainly be willing to look at that. As you know, one of the things we have tried is the alcohol detector anklets that we are trialling out in Croydon I think to stop people drinking again and being responsible again for domestic abuse. It may be that such a measure would be useful also in fighting domestic VWI because we think that the increase in reporting of domestic VWI is responsible for about 25% of this spike that we are seeing. Anyway, I am very happy to look at it.

Andrew Boff AM: Could you also, therefore, Mr Mayor, look at the idea - again proposed in that report - that we increase the use of sobriety incentives, where we --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sobriety centres?

Andrew Boff AM: Sobriety incentives, and we suggest three centres being established in London, plus the use of booze buses to deal with particular hot spots of public drunkenness that occur around London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All such measures focused on the hot spots I think should be considered. I know that the MPS is looking now at some of the key hot spots and there are a few of them around the city where we think a large chunk of this VWI is taking place.

Andrew Boff AM: We are entering a period where there is a peak in public drunkenness, up until Christmas, and I hope that you will acquaint yourself with the figures over this Christmas period to see whether or not these solutions that we have offered will be decisive, they will actually pay for themselves. As you know, we

are not a Group that happily proposes things that are not going to pay for themselves and we have established within that report, which I urge you to read, that these measures will ultimately cost less than --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure they would. One thing that we think - and Sir Bernard may correct me - but it was explained to me the other day by one borough commander, who said that he thinks it is the change in the law that means that, when someone reports domestic VWI, for instance, and then retracts it, then says, "It was nothing really", that is no longer permitted, you can no longer ignore that, you have to record it. You have to record it whatever happens. I think it was put to me the other day that could be a factor that is driving up these numbers, but Bernard is there something you want to --

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I think the other thing, it seems to me that the growth we have seen has to be understood first of all in one context, which is 95% of this extra violence is regarded as slight or moderate. Now, any violence is bad, therefore I am never going to diminish the size of it, therefore it is not the serious violence we are talking about.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not showing up in the figures.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I think a third of it, we think, is domestic violence reporting broadly, we have another third, which is down to better recording. Frankly we were challenged by Her Majesty's Inspectorate, were we recording accurately, therefore we are making sure that we are recording better. The third area, which is where we are targeting, where we can do something definite and practical about it is about public town centre violence and that often is associated with drunkenness. Therefore the Equinox Operation we have running is targeting the 25 most violent licensed venues, the 25 most violent fast food outlets, across London. As you say, obviously coming up to the Christmas period, we have another challenge, however this operation is keeping on going. We are having protective weapons sweeps through those areas and we are supporting that with Territorial Support Group (TSG) as well as borough-based.

The idea is to target what we think the problem is, however to go to the Mayor's point, if you look for another independent view about whether violence has got worse or better, London Ambulance Service (LAS) say they are carrying broadly the same number of people to hospital who have been submitted to violence. Of course that tends to be at the more serious end, however it is one indicator that it is part recording, I think, and partly something serious that we have to deal with.

Andrew Boff AM: Places recognise that because, just recently, I attended an event in Redbridge regarding domestic violence and there the professionals are indicating that they think that this is not just about increased reporting; that this is about an increase in domestic violence, and that is very worrying and I would ask that you do liaise with the professionals based at Redbridge Council to get their view on this particular matter, because it is always tempting to say this is just as a result of increased reporting, and I get that, and often in many headings that is the case. However there are some professionals on the ground, and I believe that can be also confirmed by the very good independent domestic violence advisers in Croydon as well who also I believe seem to think that this is a genuine increase. Therefore I do ask that you look at that.

Just, if I may press on, I issued a report, again a GLA Conservatives report, issued a report two years ago called *Silence on Violence* regarding the policing of sex work. That report concluded that, while there was some very good practice going on in borough police, not with regard to the MPS who has a good record in this area; however it tended to be patchy. Would Sir Bernard be supportive of the adoption of certain standards and professional protocols for policing sex work in the boroughs?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Do you want to explain to me a minimum standard, therefore it seems to me a good idea that we have a minimum standard. We have a

broad strategy, which is about obviously first of all you can target education and health as part of the deal with the sex worker as a victim. There is also a layer, which is about obviously, having been warned, then people obviously have to be, if they are going to be prosecuted, if they will not desist from that action, however equally it is to attack the demand, which is to make sure that the men - usually - who are seeking this trade are prosecuted where they are persistently loitering around trying to contact prostitutes. Those are the big ways we do it.

Then the second side is obviously the organised crime. Clearly much of this activity takes place off the street. The nuisance of it being on the street is one issue, however much of it is carried out off the street and then it becomes an organised crime issue, which obviously often goes with drug supply as well as human trafficking.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes. I would be interested in seeing the evidence that you would have in supporting the view that off-street prostitution is predominantly as a result of human trafficking because that is data I have been trying --

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Sorry, I did not say that, Andrew. I did not say it was predominantly as a result, I said it was linked to. That was fairly straightforward I think and everybody accepts that.

Andrew Boff AM: Without doubt that does happen. Also, I hope that, in the policing of the sector of on-street sex work that you do engage with those professional agencies, such as the very remarkable Spires [Spires Streetlink sex worker outreach service] that works in the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark, and I was very privileged to be with them very late the Friday before last night, seeing the problems for myself of street prostitution on Brixton Hill, and the professionals there are asking that the police do not just attack the punters, because that is an unjoined-up form of protecting the interests of these very vulnerable people.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): When you say "the punters", you mean the clients?

Andrew Boff AM: The clients.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): All right.

Andrew Boff AM: That there must be a much more victim-centred approach from borough police as well. I know that in the MPS you have a very well-developed sense of what the whole range of issues are when we are talking about prostitution in general, it is much easier than just a moral judgement, however that when you do decide to pursue the clients or the customers that you do liaise with those non-governmental organisations (NGO) that are working on the ground with these very vulnerable women.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): All right, I would probably need to understand that more because, at the end of the day, those people are committing quite a clear offence and they are creating a demand. The challenge for us, as you know as well, is that quite often we do not respond because the police are wanting to intervene, it is because the public are complaining.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes, that is the case, however that is not always --

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): What they then say is, "What are you, the police, doing about it?" They are not terribly interested in what everybody else is doing about it. Therefore we often find that there is nobody coming running to help us to explain what we are doing about it.

Andrew Boff AM: At no point am I asking you not to do your job. I am asking you, however, to base your job upon evidence and putting the victim at the centre of those priorities.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am not quite sure what you mean by that, if you mean that, in relation to the clients --

Andrew Boff AM: Let us take an example. Let us take, for example, whereby there have been, in the past, raids upon clients of street prostitution, and it might have cleared out the problem and made it less attractive to those punters, the clients of those street prostitutes. However, unless it is also followed up with NGOs who have links to those women on the streets, then all that is going to do is shift the problem to somewhere else.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): All right, and then therefore?

Andrew Boff AM: It is going to shift the problem to somewhere else and, if you are going to take such action, to be able to link with those NGOs who are working directly with those women, such as Spires, that you need to link with them before you take any such operation because, to just go in and enforce could mean that those women become even more vulnerable than they are already.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): All right, I mean the way you started, which I agree that we need to work with many bodies about this. However I really need to understand more about people committing criminal offences who are causing nuisance to businesses as well as individuals.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes, I get that.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Let me just develop it, because I listened carefully.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I would need to understand more before I reserved our position about negotiating about when we enforce the law.

Andrew Boff AM: There is absolutely no dispute about complaints. It is when proactive policing comes into play on the basis of local political priorities that then results in a much more dangerous environment for very vulnerable women.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Which we would not want to do.

Andrew Boff AM: I know you would not want to, however the report that I published two years ago and my experiences from since then have indicated that is not a uniform approach throughout London and that is what I am asking you for that we have the same professionalism in every borough.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We are agreeing on a consistent approach. I am not sure we are agreeing on the tactics yet.

Andrew Boff AM: It is not the tactics.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am saying that; I am just being clear what I am not necessarily agreeing to.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think I fully understand what we are being asked to do.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): However I would want to understand it better, quite happy to understand it better.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: A couple of very specific questions here around violent crime in London. Recorded knife crime with injury offences has gone up 51% in the last six months. We have had some terrible recent incidents across London. Given the success of the London-wide firearms amnesty last month, and this current hike in knife offences, would you consider launching a similar amnesty for knives in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We did. I mean Operation Blunt did take about 10,000 knives off the street, I remember that

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I am just wondering whether it is time to have another knife amnesty. Is that something you will consider?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I seem to remember –

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have knife bins already and we have --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: -- something promotional that you might consider, given this spike.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I mean to the best of my --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That is fine, yes, that is wonderful, thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, of course, Caroline --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: No, that is great, I have another specific question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To the best of my knowledge --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: No, no, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- knife crime is actually falling. I just want to correct you.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: All right, the Commissioner, I would like to ask something. No, no, no, I asked, I just said yes or no, you said yes, that is wonderful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Overall knife crime is falling, by the way, it is very important to get that --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Well those are not the figures I have. Commissioner, could I just ask you something. I have recently asked the Mayor about rolling out the Cardiff model in London. The Mayor has now written to all the chief executives of London Hospital Trusts to try to encourage this anonymised

emergency department data sharing. What work have you done to try to make sure the hospitals fully engage in this, because we know that it can see a drop in violent crime by about 42%?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): OK, I mean first of all in terms of just on the knife crime, I think you just have to be a little bit careful about over-interpreting the last six months, because as you know it is quite seasonal, therefore if you take the last time it got darker, then there is always a possibility that we misunderstand those trends and I think it is important that we make those proper assessments.

In terms of the general idea of amnesty, I think they are a broadly good idea, but less effective with knives on the grounds as it is always illegal to have a gun, but it can be legal to have a knife. Therefore it is great to get rid of them, however I think there is a limited effect of them.

In terms of the point about data sharing, we are constantly working with the health service to try to improve that relationship so that we get a consistent reporting on, whether it be wounding, rape, all the things that can get reported as health. We get some good work, I think probably we would all agree that we could probably see more consistency across what can be a bit of a patchwork quilt for health across London.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Lovely, thank you.

Victoria Borwick AM: Just taking us back briefly, if I may, to the pressures on the LAS at this time of the year, and obviously the point that was made earlier about drinking and excessive street drinking at this time of the year. In the past I have been fortunate enough to go out with your teams and see the valuable work they did and last week I was out representing the Mayor with the ambulance teams, and again the vast majority of people who had drunk themselves and had been abandoned by their friends and then ended up putting pressure on our hospital services, which is obviously not what we want at this time of the year. I really wanted to ask you to use this forum to remind people, because obviously most ambulance calls still come from the police, therefore I wanted just to go back and ask you to continue with your work with the ambulance service to see how we can continue, hopefully, to reduce pressure while tackling crime, therefore reducing pressure on their calls on their time, while remembering that there may be entirely valid reasons, and the more you could work together to reduce street drinking the better.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): OK. I mean first of all just let me challenge you a little bit, Victoria, I am not sure that the majority of ambulance calls come from us, they may come through us, but not from us, if that is not too pedantic a point.

Victoria Borwick AM: OK, I accept that point.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): In terms of your overall offer, I am going to resist the opportunity to be Commissioner for Scrooge, however I think if people can drink responsibly at Christmas and particularly look after each other on the streets during Christmas then that would be good, particularly if the weather turns, as we hear it will be this week, because we know that when people have had a drink they are more vulnerable to cold and they do need somebody to care for them. I think what we always hope is, in each of the boroughs, through charities, local authorities, is that there is someone there who, if all the person needs is a bit of care for a while, there is someone there to care for them.

Only two weeks ago I was in Lambeth for the latest 80 street pastors who are out there, and these are all volunteers who are quite often at advanced ages, are wandering the streets late at night, Friday, Saturday, all the week, and they are trying to help people in these very circumstances. Therefore I hope people drink responsibly, I hope they look after themselves and, as you indicate, look after their friends. Because some

people go out alone, they need somebody else to keep an eye on them too. Therefore, I think the street pastors need our support, as do the other charities.

Just to finally reassure you, on the whole we will try, where we can, to direct someone who is drunk, or even aggressive, to go home or to get healthcare rather than arrest them. There is no great outcome in that for anybody. If they will not behave then they will have to be arrested, however on the whole we try to direct them to get care.

Victoria Borwick AM: Thank you. Mr Mayor, any comments you wish to make?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, and I thank you, Victoria, for what you are doing to help the LAS through what is obviously quite a difficult time with recruitment of paramedics. I think that has been one of the big problems they have; they are simply starved of the paramedics they need and are having to go to Australia to get more.

Victoria Borwick AM: Thank you, well hopefully everyone will take that message and drink safely over this Christmas time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I am sorry, let me associate myself powerfully with what the Commissioner had to say about drinking really responsibly over Christmas, or not drinking at all.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): I am sure that is a view that everyone around the table would wish to associate themselves with.

Joanne McCartney AM: I want to come back to the issue of the rate of violent crime and I heard and I have asked questions of the Mayor, I think the last three Mayor's questions, about what is driving this increase. I would just like to comment on something Andrew Boff [AM] said about domestic violence, undoubtedly part of that is the increase in recorded domestic violence, however I am hearing from my boroughs it is about an increase in reporting, however also about an increase.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): About actual domestic violence, yes.

Joanne McCartney AM: Therefore I was wondering if either the MPS or perhaps the Mayor, in your group you have that look at violence against women and girls, could do some work to try to get to the bottom of this. I know it is a difficult topic, however would you commit to doing that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think we should and I think we should look at that through the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and we should be talking to all the rape crisis centres, all the organisations across London, that are taking in women and girls and hearing their stories. I have already said this; it is not a good enough reason just to say that there is more reporting of it. That does not mean that we can ignore it. It could be that it also reflects some social changes that are going on, some phenomenon that we need to understand better, and that is not showing up in other crime types, and that is --

Joanne McCartney AM: Therefore can I say that is a commitment from you that you will get that work done?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly think we should because I have now heard from several people that they are suspicious about this glib assertion that it is just reporting. I think we need to dig deeper into that and see what is really going on.

Joanne McCartney AM: The other thing I want to ask the Commissioner is that Assistant Commissioner Helen King gave us a very good explanation, and one you have repeated today, about the increase, about a third of it was increase in domestic violence, a third perhaps to do with alcohol, and a third that is unexplained and perhaps varies from borough to borough. She talked about a third may be to do with better recording; that is something you said.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It was of changed recording.

Joanne McCartney AM: The change in recording happened some time ago, however she talked about the way it is recorded on the police computers, it is being recorded better now than before.

However, if you have trained your officers to record it better, you would expect to have a spike and then have it plateauing off, however we are seeing month on month slight -- well, more than slight increases, therefore it looks like there is a trend developing. We know you are doing some work around alcohol and licensing with Project Equinox, however, Commissioner, are you setting a target that you want to see this violence decrease by?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have not, other than the overall targets we have, which are the MOPAC targets. It seems to me that we can reasonably aspire to at least those, therefore I think we can get back on track because we had seen two years of decrease, therefore this is from a lower base that we have seen an increase. However, I think we should be able to get back on track if we can be sure that we have analysed it properly and of course, as I said, within that we have the domestic violence, which we want to see increasing if it is only reporting, we do not want to see actual domestic violence increasing, of course. Therefore I think those are the things that we know we can still do something about.

The other thing I would urge this body to consider, often I sit here as the Police Chief and someone says, "What are you doing about violence?" but of course local authorities have a part to play in this, they are the licensing authorities. I would encourage them to look at their strategies because the density of the number of licences, how many licences are there in an area, off-licences, where you can buy stuff at supermarkets, etc, on-licences, when people are challenged about selling to underage people, do they lose a licence or do they get the 15th warning? What are the policies and strategies that local authorities have? Because I think they do have a tension between trying to promote the economic wellbeing of an area and the allocation of licences.

The Scots have, I think, got this pretty good. They have said, instead of the old needs test, "Does this area need another licence?" they have said, "Can the health of this area stand another licence?" by domestic violence, by nutrition and frankly obesity, and many other things. Therefore they check, before they add another licence to the list, not only is the person responsible, but can that area, that community, sustain it? I think we have seen too high a density of licences overall. We will do our best in this area, however I think everybody has to play their part, and if the police bring a case for a licensee who is not respecting the law I think that should be treated very seriously. It is a privilege to have a licence, not a right.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you. I have heard from one of my locals, which is that the police often leave it up to the licensing, the next time the licence is up, to bring their evidence to the licensing committee as to why that licence should not be renewed, rather than taking prosecutions themselves, therefore I would be interested in some information about the amount of prosecutions you have taken and in which boroughs, if you can provide that to the Assembly via the Chair.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Thank you.

Kit Malthouse AM: Sir Bernard, in your long and distinguished career, has there been any crime type, the statistics of which have followed a linear progression, either up or down, or has it always been two steps forward, one step back?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Crikey. Well there are two that have probably seen a general progression down, one is house burglary, and the other one is car theft. Even then they have always had a blip one way or another. Those would be the two I would say have been progressively downwards.

Kit Malthouse AM: OK, and on violence therefore, if you looked at the whole piece of your tenure, whatever it is, four-odd years now?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It has been up and down quite a lot, sometimes through recording.

Kit Malthouse AM: However the trend is now firmly downwards?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Overall I would say it is a trend down. We do not want this blip upwards to be sustained, which is why we are taking the action we are. However, overall, it has been up and down over the years.

Kit Malthouse AM: In particular, at the very severe end, not least homicide of course, the numbers are very significantly down, are they not?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, I think the last three years, I think we will be able to report some very significant reductions this year, however until April of this year we had a quarter less murders, including a third less young people murdered. We think we will see a similar sort of calendar year plus financial year reduction this year. Therefore I think in those very serious cases that is where you see that those are reducing.

Kit Malthouse AM: I think homicide is now - I think I am right in saying - about half what it was in 2004/05.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, to be fair, I think the police will take part of the responsibility in terms of our work around gangs, for example, however I think the health service has obviously played a big part in making sure that people are cared for and given the best treatment as quickly as possible.

Kit Malthouse AM: Great, well I guess the point I am trying to make is that, while you obviously need to be quizzed about these particular blips and what your tactics are to deal with it, overall the fundamental trend is down, which means that your strategy is delivering and you are happy with the fundamental strategy, albeit, like any ship in sail or aeroplane, it needs trimming from time to time to cope with the weather conditions.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, I think the only final point, and going back to this point about research into the true nature of domestic violence, or level of domestic violence, I think that is a good idea at the moment because I think there is no doubt, with the diverse community we have in London, we often have less information about families than we would have for people who have lived here for 70 years. I think where I would worry is where there are recent arrivals and how well social services, child care, education and the police, what information we have about family circumstances and the risks that are present in some families.

Kit Malthouse AM: OK, thank you.

2014/4964 - Undercover Police Still Employed by the MPS

Jenny Jones

How can Londoners have confidence in the MPS if police officers who had sexual relationships while working undercover are still employed and may not face any sanction for their behaviour?

Jenny Jones AM: This is exclusively to Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. Well, I think that the use of undercover police officers is absolutely vital and you will appreciate that there are a great many cases where Londoners have been protected by undercover --

Jenny Jones AM: Could you address the question in particular please?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- police officers and I am sure that where undercover police officers are retained for whatever contact they have had with members of the public, authorised or unauthorised, where those officers have been retained that is because it is thought that they are nonetheless pursuing the highest possible standards and we will continue to ensure that they do.

Jenny Jones AM: I want you to fast forward, OK, because Theresa May [MP, Home Secretary] has promised an inquiry, a judge-led inquiry, into undercover police officers, and supposing it happens in two, three, four years' time, and you are called as ex-Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for London to give evidence, are you going to be able to give the evidence that they want to hear? For example, will you be able to tell them how many of the four officers that were looked at by the Herne Inquiry [Operation Herne – MPS internal review into use of undercover policing by the MPS Special Demonstration Squad] were still employed by the MPS under your supervision?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I see no reason why I should not be able to give that information if that is the information that would be required in that hypothetical circumstance.

Jenny Jones AM: OK, and will you be able to tell the public inquiry how many of the officers still employed faced sanctions for their behaviour?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are talking about some sort of imaginary future here as I understand it.

Jenny Jones AM: Well, not really. I am imagining at some point the judge-led inquiry might happen and, if it does, you will be asked to give evidence. You see, what I want you to say is that you are seeking assurances that, if officers have gone against what the Commissioner, what you have said in fact, I mean I can quote you both, you know, you have said, "Sexual relationships should not occur on any undercover deployment". Now they clearly did, and some of these officers are probably still employed. Are you going -- have you sought assurances from the MPS that these officers are not engaged in further undercover operations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, no. Look, I think the assurances I have sought is that the officers concerned have not been engaged in any unethical or unprofessional behaviour and I think that is what we are talking about.

Jenny Jones AM: What I am trying to get at is that you have these rules, I understand, that officers should not engage in sex with targets when they are undercover, there are these rules, and yet none of the officers

has actually been sanctioned. What is the point of having rules if there is no punishment if you break them? I mean that is the whole concept of policing surely that you catch people who break the rules, and yet police officers seem to be exempt from this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think, when you speak of these rules, I am sure that, insofar as they exist, they have been properly upheld. I mean I would be very surprised if there were officers who remained employed as undercover officers who have been found to have behaved unethically or not in accordance with the rules.

Jenny Jones AM: Are you seeking assurances from the MPS that no undercover officers are currently permitted to engage in sexual relationships with their targets?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The Commissioner has been very clear that that is not permitted, an undercover officer and a member of the public must not and should not engage in sexual contact.

Jenny Jones AM: However, do you take my point that, if there is no sanctions for such behaviour, there is nothing to stop people doing it, is there?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, to the best of my knowledge, and obviously I will take steps to satisfy myself further on this point, to the best of my knowledge there is nobody employed as an undercover officer who is guilty of unethical behaviour or who has been convicted of unethical behaviour. Now, I would imagine there are many different interpretations of what may or may not have taken place between these officers and members of the public, however as far as I understand the matter there is --

Jenny Jones AM: Well there must have been sex in some cases because there are children.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- there is no suggestion that any of them still employed as undercover officers have been engaged in disreputable or unethical behaviour.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Chairman, may I just try and help? First of all, in terms of the allegations, and if you remember then Operation Herne is led by the Chief Constable of Derbyshire, Mick Creedon, so he is investigating these allegations about sexual contact. Some of the people who the allegations are against have left the MPS, however some do remain with us. When those investigations are concluded, which are overseen by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), then the conclusion will be reached about whether they should be criminally charged or there should be levels of misconduct. You have probably seen in the press that there were four officers where the CPS decided there would be no criminal charges recently, but misconduct charges are still being considered. Therefore that process will work its way through.

Can I just complete this, Chairman, and then I will take questions of course?

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Yes.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): The second point --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The Green group are out of time, therefore we will not be able to put supplementary questions.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): This is the vital point, which is that no officers that are subject to allegations of crime or misconduct in relation to these investigations are still employed in undercover roles.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which is what I said.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): All right, thank you.

Jenny Jones AM: Well, sort of.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I was only trying to help in terms of clarity, because this is an operational thing, for which I think I am properly responsible, and I am only trying to provide information, which I thought may help.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Commissioner, I think that is a useful assurance, and if you have anything to add to that then please do write to us about it.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I want to come back to the point we both made, which is that we have a policy that says this should not happen and, if it should happen, then we will take it seriously and investigate it properly, which I think is what we can show.

2014/4965 - Transparency in the MPS

[Caroline Pidgeon](#)

Should the MPS promote trust through transparency by having a compulsory public register of interests including membership of organisations such as the freemasons?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Commissioner, whether you could briefly answer?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): As it happens, I was surprised in a way that we had received this question, because the freemason issue had sort of gone away a little over the years. In Merseyside we had such a register and people were expected to declare if they were a freemason. I am told that the European Courts have thought that this is a conflict with basic human rights, therefore there now seems a bit of a dilemma, however I would be certainly happy to take it away and consider it further.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The European Court is riddled with freemasons!

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): The issue that has to be considered of course is: what is the reason why you would distinguish this organisation from any other? For me as a police officer the secrecy of membership is a concern. I think police officers should be transparent about their associations, nothing to hide, then why not mention it? If you do it for the police, you have to do it for other branches of the criminal justice system, and I understand that not everyone has the same view, however my view would be that you ought to be open about your associations. It is not the fact of being a member of the organisation; it is the lack of transparency about that. However I am told there is a legal dilemma and I have told you where I stand.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That is really reassuring, Commissioner, because I think trust is really essential for the public and we have had some really recent high-profile cases where we have seen respected celebrities and other public servants jailed, some of them as paedophiles, and their hideous crimes uncovered, and I think with this sort of thing going on it is really important for the public to have absolute trust in the police and their investigations.

Mr Mayor, do you think it is right for the MPS to have a compulsory public register of interests, including membership of the freemasons?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly think that the MPS should, if there is any question of a crime being committed by somebody who is a freemason, and the member of the MPS knows it, the trouble is that they have to register their membership of the freemasons. However, as I understand it, you do not have an existing register of all cops who are masons.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): What we have, and I was incomplete in my answer, I am sorry about that, is that we have a register of what I call associations, so there are things like we have a list here and I will not read right through it, however if you have a relationship with a person with convictions, if you have a relationship with persons charged with a criminal offence, these are associations that should be notified for the obvious reasons really, and so you go on. I think we are about the only organisation that says you have to declare membership of the BNP [British National Party], for example, and it is incompatible with being a police officer. Therefore I think we can show we have had that register and that sort of duty to report. Where I think the deeper question perhaps might be is whether this particular organisation, if we should have to register it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The question is, should members of the MPS have to register their membership of the freemasons as a matter of course, any more than they have to register their membership of the Women's Institute, for instance, or whatever they belong to. As I understand it, although you might like to have such a register, the European Court, which is itself, and all European institutions, as everybody knows, the EU is full of masons, they have said that is not possible.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Back in 1999, the Home Office made all police officers complete a declaration on freemasonry. This has not continued since. However, interestingly in October last year police officers who were freemasons were banned by the IPCC from working on the criminal investigation into Hillsborough issues. Therefore it is quite clear that there are concerns around freemasonry, in my research for my question today I was looking at some footage around North Wales and some of the issues around a paedophile ring there, and there were very clear issues raised around the possibility of freemasonry being involved there.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You mean they are all protecting each other?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Therefore I just feel that we need transparency if people are to have full confidence in the police, therefore I am wondering whether, Mr Mayor, you will support looking at how you can find a way that police officers would have to declare whether they are members of the freemasons.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will. Hands up who is not a mason? Is not. OK, so not much freemasonry here then, OK.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: We know in the past Members of this Authority have had to declare, and I think we --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Dismore! My God, he is a Mason!

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: -- do have at least a couple of members of the freemasons here --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do we?! Who?!

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: -- however that is not the issue today --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK, sorry.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: The issue I am trying to raise is about confidence in the police, and given the historic cases of child sexual abuse that have been reported, including allegations of this VIP paedophile ring in Westminster, I think it is absolutely vital that the MPS who are investigating this are seen to be open and transparent to declare any membership of such organisations.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hang on a minute, before you --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Will you look at that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think, before you -- I mean you are making a pretty heavy charge here, Caroline --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I am being very careful in what I am saying.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): as I understand it, which is that you seem to be, on the basis of hearsay, you seem to be suggesting that the freemasons are involved in paedophile rings and protecting each other from -- is that what you are saying?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I said there have been allegations of this. I am not saying it is definitely true or not. I am saying there are allegations. Can I ask the Commissioner --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have to say I read the news pretty closely. It is the first time I have heard it but you obviously have better intelligence about these things. I think it is a pretty serious charge to make. As far as I can remember, the Duke of Kent is the leading freemason, he is. There are all sorts of people doing funny handshakes all over the place and there probably have been for thousands of years. I think it is a bit of a long day's march to say they are all involved in a plot to conceal paedophile murders. I think you ought to be careful about that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I am careful about it. I would like to ask the Commissioner a final question then on this. I did really welcome your response. Given there are concerns out there in the public, will you ensure that none of the officers who are investigating the alleged Westminster paedophile ring are members of organisations such as the freemasons?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They have to.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I am asking the Commissioner.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Right. I think all I can do is tell you what the law is at the moment. In 2007, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) judgment, which I will not bother giving you the title of, said:

“Any requirement to declare membership of freemasonry is in violation of Article 11 which is the right to have lawful association taken in conjunction with Article 14, the right not to be discriminated against of the European Convention and Human Rights.”

This ruling was taken into account by the then Home Secretary, Jack Straw [MP], in 2009 to end the Government stance of seeking to require applicants for judicial office to declare membership of the freemasons. I will consider what you have said.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is the legal advice we have and it cannot be ignored.

Roger Evans AM (Chair): The Liberal Democrats are out of time. Deputy Chair Arnold.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes, thank you, Chair. I have a couple of questions for the Commissioner and for the Mayor. It is moving away; it is still on transparency but it is moving away from the topic raised by my colleague.

Roger Evans AM (Chair): Not too far.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Not too far but it is just to do with transparency. My question is in terms of transparency, in terms of what the MPS says and what the MPS does. I think that is really a good link. I want to ask the Commissioner in terms of what the MPS says about stop and search figures and the confidence that then engenders and then what issues a TV programme raises. I refer to the Channel 4 programme that talked about whereas the MPS is saying it does not have any stop and search targets, the Channel 4 programme under the Freedom of Information request found that a number of Metropolitan police officers were carrying out targeted stop and search activities. I just want to ask the Commissioner how that fits in with terms of transparency in terms of what you say about stop and search and what is actually going on.

Roger Evans AM (Chair): I should stop you there because that is actually completely unrelated to the subject matter of the question.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): The subject matter is transparency.

Roger Evans AM (Chair): No, the title is 'Transparency', that is not the subject matter. Having said that, I did actually not allow supplementary questions on the initial statement of the Commissioner, therefore, I will allow him to respond to that question but we will not push that matter where we cannot.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Right. In terms of targets, the only target we set around stop and search, as Jennette [Arnold OBE AM] will remember, is that we wanted to reduce it and make it more effective and less disproportionate and reduce complaints. Over the last three years, we have achieved all of those. We are now carrying out less than half of what we did in 2011.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): What do you say --

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Let me just complete and then, of course, I will take a further question. We have actually nearly all but halved it since 2011. We have reduced the disproportionality. We have halved the complaints and yet we have arrested more people through that tactic. We have shown it is better targeted, which is where I am going for your final point about targeting. We have set targets to reduce it, I acknowledge that; I want to see less of it, but in terms of targeting the targeted, we have targeted some of those people who deserve it, who are the people like the gang members who are going to go round and hurt people. We have targeted the people who we believe deserve it but we have to go within the law which means obviously, at the time we make the stop and search, is that we have sufficient belief that there is reason for that stop and search which is about the reasons whether it be

collecting evidence, weapons or drugs. We need to make sure we have that proper justification. In that sense, I acknowledge targeting and I acknowledge targets.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Do you not think it is an issue of concern to those people who have been following this issue when they receive information from a reputable TV channel which says they were told and they saw information that suggested your officers were expected to, if you like, stop and search at least two people every month? There were specific numbers allocated to stop and search activities that were to be undertaken.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): If that was the case, I do not acknowledge that is the strategy. If it has happened locally, of course, we will look at it. If it was, it has been remarkably unsuccessful in driving stop and search up because over the last three years, they have come down to historically low levels in a way the MPS has never seen. I do not accept that even if it has happened occasionally, it has had any profound effect.

I think what that programme did show, and I was asked about this on Saturday, was that there are some officers who seem to have made multiple stop checks where there has been no proper outcome and often those have been black men. That worries me and I would want to know why that is. Maybe they can justify it but I think that raises a question that I would want the answer to. I think overall, we have a far better position than we see in many capitals around the world where, in fact, stop and search has been divisive with the population, the society, rather than helpful.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): As far as you are concerned, there is no issue about what the MPS is saying about stop and search in terms of transparency and what it actually does?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not think so in the way I have tried to describe here what I take to be the question. I am not content that we are yet at the bottom of the slope in terms of reducing stop and search and making it more effective. What I think we show over the last three years is that we have wisely reduced it. At the same time, violence has come down generally. I know we have talked about 'violence with injury' today but, on the whole, violence has come down.

When I took that decision three years ago, if I had been sat before you seeing homicide going through the roof, more people stabbed and a huge amount of more serious violence, you would have said, "Why the heck did you stop stop and searching?" It was a risk to take three years ago but we have reduced it, we have reduced violence and we have made it better targeted. If there are individual cases where officers are using that power badly, I would want to know and I want us to do something about it ie - stop it.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chair): Right. The Labour Group is out of time and we have reached the end of our questions. Are you doing this as a supplementary on that question which we just asked because you did not indicate?

Andrew Boff AM: Yes. I was kind of --

Roger Evans AM (Chair): You have --

Andrew Boff AM: Twelve seconds. We will do it.

Roger Evans AM (Chair): Go for it.

Andrew Boff AM: Commissioner, is the Metropolitan Police planning any more days of action to help tackle knife crime following the success of Operation Big Wing?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Andrew, I just missed the first part of that.

Andrew Boff AM: Is the MPS planning any more days of action to help tackle knife crime following the success of Operation Big Wing?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We are still using Big Wing as a tactic and we will be doing that over the coming weeks but I cannot tell you the date offhand. I can try to find that out for you.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chair): Right, good, great. That has completed the question session. Can I thank the Mayor and the Commissioner for what I think has been a very informative and useful session. I also thank Members for their questions as well.