



City Hall Greens

**Caroline Russell AM
City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
LONDON E16 1ZE**

Diana Luchford
Chief Executive Officer, MOPAC

City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
London E16 1ZE
(via email)

4 September 2023

Dear Diana,

Transparency in MOPAC and the Met

I am writing to you with concerns about the transparency of MOPAC and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS).

It is important for trust and confidence that the MPS are transparent and do not obstruct the disclosure of information into the public domain.

As Baroness Casey found in her review, “The Met have in the past avoided scrutiny, holding MOPAC at arms-length, and not sharing information and data...Transparency around police actions and incidents is integral to policing by consent.”¹ The Review also highlighted that London MPs felt frustrated by a lack of responsiveness from the MPS. A lack of transparency does a disservice to the work of MOPAC and the MPS, and only heightens suspicion and mistrust in the processes and operations of both organisations.

Mayor’s Questions

Mayor’s Questions are the one of the principal means by which the London Assembly, as the voice of London, scrutinises MOPAC and accesses information from the MPS on behalf of Londoners. Yet too often Assembly Members are left waiting for months, even over a year, for questions to be answered. These are unacceptable delays.

I currently still have questions without answers from June 2022 on stop and search² and July 2022 on police involvement in the Uber trade union protest.³

Other recent questions I have submitted that have taken a year or more to get a response include questions about claims made by the MPS on social media⁴, the numbers of Roads and Transport Policing Command (RTPC) officers⁵, the budget of the serious collisions investigations unit⁶, and the quality of strip search data.⁷

In addition, a recent question of mine on the locations of strip search also took 10 months to be answered.⁸ The eventual response not only revealed that an answer from a year earlier had provided a figure incorrect by a factor of three, but also that 21 per cent of strip search locations were apparently unknown, simply recorded as ‘other’.

I have no doubt that other Assembly Members have also experienced frustration with the length of time it takes to get responses from the MPS.

Can you and MOPAC work with the MPS to ensure that the speed of responses to police related Mayor’s Questions from London Assembly Members improves so that Londoners can have more confidence that the MPS is being as transparent as it can be?

Serious Sexual Offences Problem Profile and other FOI requests

I have also been contacted by people who have submitted Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to the MPS and have faced unacceptable delays or blanket rejections to their requests.

A recent FOI from Times journalist George Greenwood regarding the Serious Sexual Offences Problem Profile has been repeatedly denied in a blanket fashion by the MPS. Most other forces have released the report with sensitive data redacted, as is standard practice. The MPS is now the only police service in the UK appealing a decision of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) instructing it to do the same.

Denying the release of information into the public domain, especially when other police services have released similar data, is not the level of transparency that Londoners expect from the MPS.

Can you and MOPAC work with the MPS to release the Serious Sexual Offences Problem Profile in redacted form, and ensure that their responses to FOI requests are as open and transparent as possible?

Safer Schools review

A review of the role of police officers in schools was first promised in April 2020, following claims that the MPS had failed to take account of the disproportionately negative impact on black and minority ethnic children. MOPAC said last year the final report was due to be published in autumn 2021, then it was delayed until summer 2022.⁹ In February 2023 I was told by the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime that recommendations had been agreed, and that she did not know why the review had not yet been published.¹⁰

During this time the number of police officers in UK schools has increased, with half of the total based in London, according to the Runnymede Trust.¹¹ The Deputy Commissioner has acknowledged that the prospect of schools turning to officers for disciplinary matters means “there is a very real risk we criminalise children that we wouldn’t have encountered in the streets”.¹² Such lengthy delays to this review are inexcusable and deny Londoners the information they need to determine the proportionality of placing Met police officers in

schools. It is also concerning to see that the London Disproportionality Board, which exists to “maintain transparency and accountability” of the Mayor’s Action Plan to address the over-policing of black Londoners, has not published minutes since January 2023 despite meetings having been scheduled for April and July of this year.¹³ That Board received the Terms of Reference of the new Safer Schools Partnership Board but these do not appear to have been made available publicly.

Will you make the publication of the Safer Schools review and all associated research an urgent priority, to provide maximum transparency about the risks of disproportionality of placing Met police officers in London’s schools?

Will you also publish the Terms of Reference and latest minutes of the London Disproportionality Board, and the Terms of Reference and membership of the Safer Schools Partnership Board?

Legal defences and costs

A lack of transparency goes hand in hand with the “defensiveness and denial” highlighted by Baroness Casey as one of the prevailing cultures the MPS needs to tackle. The failure to accept wrong-doing in response to complaints and legal challenges is a key symptom of this culture. A recent investigation from Liberty Investigates, published in partnership with the Times, says that the MPS has spent at least £138 million on legal battles since 2016.¹⁴

The investigation found that “the largest portion of the Met’s legal spend was made up of the costs of fighting civil claims brought by members of the public against the force for matters including neglect, wrongdoing, use of force and property damage.”

Despite promises of greater transparency, Andrew Frederick, a lawyer at Scott-Moncrieff & Associates, is quoted by Liberty Investigates as saying that the Met still resists settling cases where its officers are clearly at fault, preferring instead to persist in the hope claimants will abandon the case.

The New Met Plan for London has committed to reducing the time taken to investigate complaints and misconduct.

Will you work with the MPS to address this culture of defensiveness identified by Baroness Casey and improve the transparency of its responses?

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Russell

Green Party Member of the London Assembly

¹ Baroness Casey Review Final Report, March 2023

<https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/baroness-casey-review/update-march-2023/baroness-casey-review-march-2023a.pdf>

² Stop and search seizures (2), June 2022

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/stop-and-search-seizures-2>

³ Police involvement in Uber trade union protest, July 2022

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/police-involvement-uber-trade-union-protest>

⁴ Belgravia Square incident, May 2022

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/belgravia-square-incident>

⁵ Numbers of Roads and Transport Policing Command (RTPC) officers, September 2021

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/numbers-roads-and-transport-policing-command-rtpc-officers>

⁶ Serious Collision Investigation Unit, November 2021

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/serious-collision-investigation-unit>

⁷ Quality of strip search data, May 2022

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/quality-strip-search-data>

⁸ Strip search location details, July 2022

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/strip-search-location-details>

⁹ Safer Schools Officers final report, July 2022

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/safer-schools-officers-final-report>

¹⁰ Police and Crime Committee meeting [1 hr 43 mins in], February 2022

<https://webcasts.london.gov.uk/Assembly/Event/Index/8fd9906e-3bc9-423a-bbd0-7e1268c02474>

¹¹ Over-policed and under-protected, January 2023

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/over-policed-and-under-protected-the-road-to-safer-schools>

¹² Concerns raised over use of police in London schools, February 2023

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/safer-schools-officers-metropolitan-police-runnymede-trust-b1063432.html>

¹³ London Disproportionality Board, September 2023

<https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/mopac-governance-and-decision-making/london-disproportionality-board>

¹⁴ Met Police Has Spent At Least £138m On Legal Battles Since 2016, July 2023

<https://libertyinvestigates.org.uk/articles/met-police-has-spent-at-least-138m-on-legal-battles-since-2016/>