



Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: The work of the Metropolitan Police, HC 312

Tuesday 8 September 2015

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Members present: Mr Keith Vaz (Chair); Victoria Atkins, James Berry, Mr David Burrowes, Nusrat Ghani, Mr Ranil Jayawardena, Tim Loughton, Stuart C. McDonald, Keir Starmer, Anna Turley, Mr David Winnick

Questions 1 – 55

Examination of Witness

Witness: **Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe**, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, gave evidence.

Chair: Could I call the Committee to order and refer everyone present to the Register of Members' Interests, where the interests of members of this Committee are noted? I welcome the Commissioner. This is part of our continuing look at the work of the Metropolitan Police. Welcome, Commissioner. In four days' time you will be celebrating your fourth anniversary to the day of being appointed as Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, so congratulations on surviving those four years.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon.

Q1 Chair: One of the setbacks during those four years has been the issue of water cannons. Were you very disappointed when the Home Secretary announced that she could not accept your recommendation and that of the Mayor to allow you to use those water cannons?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Not disappointed. It wasn't an emotional response. It was just a professional, objective one. If you remember, after the riots we said that professionally, we thought there was a need to fill a gap in the way that we approach serious public disorder, which was the worst we had seen on these streets, let alone in the United Kingdom, for tens of years. That was born not from my direct experience but from talking to officers who on that first Saturday night had been subject to missile throwing for six, seven, eight hours, and we had not been able to help them.

If you remember, at that time the Government of course said that the availability of water cannon would be possible during the coming days. That wasn't possible at the time. We hadn't got training. Obviously we could not get hold of the kit in Northern Ireland. So it was on those grounds that we made the case, first of all to the then Association of Chief Police Officers—ACPO as was, and now the National Police Chiefs' Council—so it wasn't only the Met, although I instigated it, and obviously our professional colleagues accepted that. Then of course we had to make a case. That case was made to, first of all, the Mayor—who needed to be persuaded, to be fair—and then, subsequently, obviously the Home Secretary. As you know, she explained to Parliament that she could not accept that on two grounds: one about the technical aspects of the water cannon, which we believe we have addressed and, secondly, the fundamental issue about whether it was appropriate. Clearly, a political decision. We have given our advice and it is a political decision that the Government has to make.

Q2 Chair: At a time of big cuts to the Metropolitan Police you and the Mayor have spent £218,000 on this. What are you going to do with these water cannon that you cannot now use?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: First of all, we cannot use them on the streets. There needs to be a licence to be police-operational. What we can do is use them for training. We do have an ongoing requirement to train our officers for mutual aid. That means obviously when we deploy our officers in different parts of the country they need to be ready to do that in Carlisle, Leeds or wherever they might be deployed, and vice versa. Equally, they need to be trained to provide support to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. In the past, when the troubles in Northern Ireland were very severe, of course there was soldier support, military aid, and of course the police service in Northern Ireland was of the order of 13,000 to 14,000 people. It is now down to about 7,000. So the reserve capacity for the service of Northern Ireland is now the rest of the United Kingdom. We have sent officers over there over the last couple of years during the marching season, and where they do serve they maybe have to work with water cannon, so we do train them for that possibility.

Secondly, of course, it remains open to the Government further to licence it so that the requirement is there.

Q3 Chair: You are hopeful that if there is a new Home Secretary in the future you might be able to ask again?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Chair, I am not going to discuss that particular thing. I will just say that I professionally believe that there is a case for it. Clearly we have not carried that day at the moment but circumstances can change, as can the threat.

Q4 Chair: You are quite satisfied you have met all the concerns? As far as you can see on the technical points, you think you have done your job?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: We believe so. There were 67 issues identified. We believe we have addressed all those. Some of them are quite minor things but we have addressed them and I think we are now waiting for DSTL, the Defence Science and Technology

Laboratory, to provide a report to SACMILL, which is a separate committee on health issues, and we await that work. But I think SACMILL are needing something like £8,000 to do that. That is an issue for the Home Office to address. But certainly I know in October the National Police Chiefs' Council, under the chairmanship of David Shaw in this particular area, put back to the Home Office, "Would you like to consider that the Met has addressed the 67 issues to see whether or not in the future, should the policy change, this kit is suitable and fit for purpose?"

Q5 Chair: So in October you are going to try again?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: In terms of the SACMILL assessment, the technical assessment, that at least should be tied off, because it is an open end at the moment. We said we have addressed the 67 issues, and as yet that has not been assessed by an independent body, which we think would be quite a sensible thing to do given all the investment that has gone in.

Chair: Thank you.

Q6 Mr David Burrowes: There is a gap in policing. If there was—let us speculate on it—another serious disturbance in the streets of Enfield, how would you plug the gap?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: We have to rely on what we have now. What worried me in 2011 was, although sometimes people worry about water cannon—and I understand why; it is not usual for the UK, I understand that, apart from Northern Ireland. In mainland UK it has never been used. I understand that change, but all the alternatives carry risks: officers running into a crowd using their fists, frankly, or metal batons or ASPs. You have baton rounds available. We have never deployed them, but they are licensed. I would argue they are a far more aggressive form of intervention with a crowd, but they are available. They have never been used on the UK mainland. Then there are horses. A horse running at 30 miles an hour into a crowd is going to cause serious injury. All these alternatives are difficult.

It seems to me on the back of the Government's account that this could be a potential filling of the gap, before you deploy horses, before you deploy what are now called attenuated energy projectiles, but essentially baton rounds. It gives you another option, and essentially it is firing water. I think there was a German case where a man lost his sight, sadly, but I think that was one case out of many years of other countries using them. I am not a great advocate in the sense of, "I think these are the thing that will solve policing", but I think it is part of a panoply of things that might ease some of the things we have to do. I think they ought to be considered.

Q7 James Berry: Commissioner, assuming that a water cannon is off the agenda politically—at least for the time being, as you have accepted—are you considering any other public order tactics not currently used in the UK, like sound cannons, for instance?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: We haven't at the moment, but I think all these things have benefits. We are not sure whether or not all of those are tested. I am not sure of any other

country in the world that uses those. There are some pieces of kit around, and they can be used, but of course they can be defeated as well, so someone wearing a helmet, blocking, can have an effect on that. So each one of the options has its own costs or risk. We were not persuaded at this stage that that would be worth pursuing now. It may be that as they develop it could be in the future.

Q8 Keir Starmer: Chair, can I declare an interest? I have known Sir Bernard for a number of years as DPP.

Commissioner, can I turn to a different topic, body-worn cameras? In the briefing we have it says that 20,000 police officers are going to have them from, I think, March next year, and I have long been an advocate of this. Is that all frontline police officers?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: It is. At the moment we have 1,000 officers with this kit.

Keir Starmer: Which was the trial.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: That's it, 10 boroughs, and also our firearms officers, for reasons that we may come to. We are experimenting with it because of two things: we need to get used to it. We need to be able to store and retrieve information, and of course working with the courts and CPS we need to work out how we are going to do that. By the end of March we should have obtained all the other kit, and everyone should have one. To answer your question on the front line—

Q9 Keir Starmer: It is all the front line, yes, which is good. Is that then for all operations? I know that Tessa Jowell and Doreen Lawrence have said they should always be used in stop and search. Is it envisaged that the body cameras will be used for all operations that are carried out in public?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Yes, with just some reservations in some relatively small but you might say important areas. If officers are covertly deployed and the camera could be recognised, then if we cannot find a way to hide it, it would be rather foolish to wear it. But sometimes there are other ways around that. But generally, yes, I think on most deployments we would expect officers to, first of all, wear it and, secondly, use it.

Q10 Keir Starmer: Yes. Then finally on this, does that include investigating domestic violence? I have always maintained that if you had a body cam and the 999 tape, you could prosecute almost every domestic incident. Will they be used routinely for domestic violence?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Yes. It is one of the major deployments for a uniform operations response in a neighbourhood. We have already seen some good cases where we capture good evidence; sometimes the offender admits the offence, certainly the victim explains carefully what has happened. But I think some of it is almost intangible—the fear where a child or a woman, usually—not always but usually a woman—dare not actually say what has happened because the offender is stood by their side, but the moment they go the person relaxes. I think we have one good case where as the officer walks down the corridor you see the blood that is smeared on the wall, which perhaps you could have captured in a statement, but nothing is so eloquent as an image.

Q11 Keir Starmer: That is good.

Turning to something else completely, you have given us some figures for those travelling for the purpose of involvement in terrorism-related activities to Syria. The last figures you gave us were earlier this year. Do you have up-to-date figures? You may have them to hand but, if not, can you provide them?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: We will certainly do our best to provide them. Essentially we do often rely on the Security Service and sometimes they are literally looked at to be precise. We have talked before publicly about something of the order of 700. I think that has increased to some extent, but we are not talking doubling or anything like that. I will try to get you a more up-to-date figure for the last year.

Q12 Chair: That would be very helpful. Thank you. Just on evidence-based policing, Sara Thornton on the Victoria Derbyshire programme said that, because of the budget cuts, there would be an attempt by police forces to prioritise certain types of crime, and she talked about the police not attending some burglaries. You in response said, “If somebody comes into your home, then I think you should reasonably expect the police to come and investigate it”, but you did talk about a compromise and a struggle in some areas to achieve priorities. Is it still the policy of the Met to go to every burglary?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Yes, and I anticipate it will be in the future. My grounds are ones you have articulated. It seems to me someone invading your home is a serious issue. What we know from experience is that when someone breaks in when someone is in the property, there is always a risk of murder or serious injury. So for me that alone is one good reason. A second is that pragmatically, we have relatively few burglaries, even in London, which is a big city where you tend to get more crimes than you do in the shires. We have on average about seven burglaries per borough per day. My argument is, even if we did not go to those, we would not save an awful lot of time, and yet I think we would let the complainant down quite badly.

I think what we are seeing in some of these things that are being said about prioritisation is the symptom of a problem, which is that chiefs are worried about the size of the cuts they anticipate, and they are reaching for things that they think will save money and be a sensible solution. I do not happen to agree about burglary, but we are going to have to compromise somewhere. The debate with the Government is how much money we will have. For the police, with the money we get, in a public debate, which this may be part of, what should we do less of?

Chair: Perfectly on that, we turn to Ranil Jayawardena.

Q13 Mr Ranil Jayawardena: Commissioner, I understand that the Met’s budget is around £3.5 billion and you are planning to reduce that budget over the next four years by £800 million. Would you be able to tell us what functions we might expect the Met might not be able to perform, and the impact it might have on London’s communities?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: The one thing I would say is that it is not our plan. We would prefer to lose nothing and to maintain what we have, so this is obviously the recession, and I think any Government would have to seriously consider public spending.

Where we are at the moment is that, first of all, I would argue that the Met has approached constructively the problem of a recession and the lack of public money. We have lost about £400 million over the last four years, which is proportionately what every other force has lost, I understand. But we are the only force who maintained our police officer numbers. I think it is important for a police force to have police officers, so we maintained 32,000. During that four years, for some of which I have been coming here, our numbers dropped to about 30,000, but the savings we have made we reinvested back in the police numbers, so we got back to 32,000.

We have achieved that by three big things. One is by having less managers. We were the most expensive with managerial costs, but now in terms of our family forces—big metropolitan forces, Manchester, Birmingham—we are the lowest in that family and we are going to get lower. Secondly, we have lost 3,500 of our police staff. I say “lost”, but, you know, they do not have a job. Thirdly, we have nearly sold about one third of our estate. We had over 600 buildings and we sold about 200.

Those three things together, plus some contractual changes and outsourcing of things, which is another contract we have just signed now, have contributed to being able to afford those officers. That is going to get more difficult in the future. You will have seen that obviously the Treasury has announced that each Department that is not protected—clearly the Home Office is not, so we aren’t—has to consider cuts of between 25% and 40% for the future. We say any cut in excess of 20% will lead to less policing. We think we still have some options to have the efficiencies, but anything at 40% will be a serious concern; 20% we think we can manage over the next few years, but we do not know where that debate will land. We are taking part in it, and of course today is part of it too.

Q14 Mr Ranil Jayawardena: Could you give us some examples about the differences between—to take your two figures—the 40% and the 20%, and the impact of that?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: The sort of thing that we are having to consider is, first of all, looking at our basic command unit structure. For those who are not involved in policing, that means in London, every borough has a basic command unit and has a chief superintendent leading a team. So from Lambeth at about 1,200 people to Merton at far fewer—quite a spectrum. We are looking at whether we can continue with that command structure, because what that brings with it is two costs: the leadership cost, and then those things that we provided that you might call back-office, but intelligence, all those things we do to schedule events and things. Can we do those to share across boroughs? That is one of the proposals being put forward. The dilemma for me personally—and there are London MPs in the room—is that we have had a great deal of strength from our connection with the London boroughs. We do not want to abandon that strength.

Q15 Mr Ranil Jayawardena: On that point, do you track the satisfaction of the public with your service, and do you have any figures that you are able to share on the satisfaction of the

public with the Met from the position you were at to the position you are at now, which might give us a bit of a feel on the direction of travel with further savings?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: First of all, I would argue that we have the best data on satisfaction and confidence in the country. There is a national scheme and we do our own as well, which we can make available to the Committee. What it has shown in the last four years, even when, frankly, at times we have been reputationally challenged—we have issues; we are a big force, and we have had things that I have come to the Committee to talk about—is that our confidence has risen and our satisfaction went up too, so we are able to show that. Of course it is not a similar picture right across London, and we have seen some huge improvements in areas. Waltham Forest, where I happened to be yesterday, has seen a huge increase in satisfaction. It is quite a difficult, challenging area, but the local police have done a really good job. In other areas we have seen it dip, but broadly across London, we have seen a broad increase, and we can make that data available.

Chair: That would be very helpful.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: There are other things we are having to consider, obviously. Police community support officers—can we continue to afford them in the same way? I said we had lost 3,500 police staff. A significant portion of those are from the police community support officers.

Q16 Mr Ranil Jayawardena: In terms of the money you have available, do you think, given that there are police commissioners across most of the country—I recognise in the Met's case it is the Mayor—that the mechanism does exist for PCCs to increase precepts where they believe it is necessary, to fund additional officers or whatever other service might be needed?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I think there are two things the Home Office is trying to consider alongside each other, which is very difficult. One is cuts of this order. Each year there is always a bit of fluctuation, but these are very significant cuts over a very short period of time. There is already the CSR, which reports about December. Obviously the negotiations are ongoing.

The second issue the Home Office is starting to address is, almost regardless of the amount of money that is available for policing, is it being distributed appropriately? It is the funding formula. As you will know, funding formulas are historically awful to try to work out, so it is going to be a difficult year, both in cutting the amount of money and because we are told from the Home Office announcements that it has to consider relocating money from cities to rural areas. This is quite a difficult thing in the relatively short time it has to be considered, which compounds our concerns.

Chair: Thank you. Mr Jayawardena, a final question.

Q17 Mr Ranil Jayawardena: It touches on the answer that has just been given, Chairman. Clearly, London has a specific role as our capital city of the United Kingdom and receives

another £173 million, or something in the order of that. Do you think that accurately reflects the additional needs that London has in keeping our capital city safe?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: We don't think so. If anybody is here from outside London, they would say, "Well, you would say that" but we think it under-represents the scale of it where there are two sides to it. For example, we have a separate grant about protection of place and people. We think that underestimates the scale of that. Then, secondly, generally, whether there is a protest outside embassies, or whatever it happens to be, we have to suck this stuff in from the rest of London. So we think that that needs to be addressed, particularly at a time when the grant might drop.

You could call it a subsidising argument, but we are also the reserve for other forces. When they want help through specialists or volume we will help them too. So we are not sure yet that it does represent parity, and particularly at the moment, that is going to be a subsidising feature of whatever happens with the grant, because what we have not been told either is when this will be implemented. We think there is a lot more negotiation to do. It is a complex area. How do you compare Carlisle and London? Very, very hard. Any forum is going to struggle with that. I think it is best to take some time to do that and then, once decided, probably to implement it over a reasonable period of time, because otherwise there will be a rapid deceleration on grant and the reallocation of funding, and there could be a compound effect, which I think is worrying.

Q18 James Berry: Thank you, Commissioner. You are aware that councils are able to purchase additional police officers, and in Kingston we purchased six quite recently, and over the first four months that they were in operation they reduced crime in Kingston town centre by 25%. Are you aware of this being taken up widely around London, being your area, and are you aware of whether these additional police officers have reduced crime in the way they have in Kingston?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: First of all, it is a bit patchy. There are some boroughs, as you have indicated, that have been really helpful, and to be fair I did not address one of Mr Jayawardena's points, which was about whether or not the local precept or taxation was flexible. It has been capping. I think the Home Office are considering—they are having to—whether or not there is more flexibility locally, which I would argue for. Here in London we have a mayoral election next year, and each of the candidates will have to work out what they want to do about local tax, because if there is going to be less central grant, can it be subsidised? At the moment it is fairly limited, with a ceiling. What is possible?

But you are right, there are some local arrangements. We have a very big contract with Transport for London. They pay for a separate transport area, which obviously polices the buses but which the local boroughs gets some benefit from too in the hubs. It is not a discrete body of officers who will only do buses, they will police the people of London. So I think that type of approach is helpful.

The final thing I would say is that, of course, each of the local authorities has a similar challenge. They are not flush with money, so they are going to have a similar challenge. So it is not easy for them, but yes, anything like that is helpful.

Q19 Mr David Winnick: I want to ask one or two questions on police officer numbers as well, Commissioner, but, first of all, could you give us the number of teenagers who have been murdered so far this year?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I do not have the exact numbers here. The overall number of murders is slightly up on last year if you look at the rolling year—I think 64 compared to 60. The number of teenagers I would have to check for you, but I think it is something of the order of nine. But I must check that for you. I am sorry, I was not aware that you were going to ask that.

Q20 Mr David Winnick: The figures I have are that over a period of 10 years some 175, or perhaps slightly more, teenagers have been murdered in the London area. That is very alarming, as I am sure you will agree, Commissioner. Can you give any information at all about the arrests and charges that have followed such teenage murders?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: As Mr Winnick says, any teenager death—any murder—is terrible; a young person’s murder particularly is awful. Although you have grouped them together over 10 years, you will see that over the last few years they have come down significantly. But we are still getting about 10 a year, which is quite a lot. In terms of the conviction rate, it is very good. We have worked, as every Member will know, pretty well with the CPS. I think our detection rate has been around 95%, which equates to a charging rate as well. Generally, if people commit murders in London they get charged and it is detected. We do not tend to get repeat murders. So on the whole we have had great success with that, because of three things: good police investigation; we have some good homicide teams who work with the CPS, who have had dedicated people and built up good relationships; and thirdly, good medical care.

Q21 Mr David Winnick: Would you be able to supply the Committee with the information about the number of teenagers murdered last year and so far this year, whether charges have been made and how many charges?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Of course. One of the biggest issues that still concerns me, regardless of the numbers almost, is the number of teenagers who are murdered with knives. We do not generally tend to have a problem with firearms, but the casual carrying of knives remains a serious issue.

Q22 Mr David Winnick: Yes, of course. There was an expression, as you obviously know, “Black on black”. You know what that meant. Would that still be the position to a large extent?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: There is a disproportionate number of black victims and a disproportionate number of black offenders. It remains an issue.

Q23 Mr David Winnick: Commissioner, on numbers, the information I understand is that there has been a reduction. Whereas at the end of March 2010 you had well over 33,000

officers, the figure at the end of March this year was about 31,500, so there has been a clear loss.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Mr Winnick, I pick different years, because I came in 2011, so at the highest that the Met has ever been there were over 33,000, as you suggested, when funding was there. When I arrived in 2011 it got down to about 32,000 and the Mayor agreed, and I wanted, to keep them at 32,000. But at the beginning, when we had to make the savings we talked about, we could not afford it so we had to make savings. Today, as I speak to you—I cannot be absolutely precise—I think there are about 31,800. So I would argue we got back to our 2011 numbers, having made the savings and recruited the officers—I think 3,500 over the last 18 months, which I think is a great achievement, but it brings its own pressures.

Q24 Mr David Winnick: Would you give any sort of estimate of what the figure is likely to be by the end of this Parliament, bearing in mind funding reductions and the rest?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I will give you a better idea after December. I am not trying to be difficult, you know that, but generally, until we know the amount of money, it is a bit of a speculation. I think in my answer to questions at the beginning I indicated that anything over 20% reduction in grant will lead to a significant reduction in the number of police officers, and that would concern me.

Q25 Mr David Winnick: You have expressed that view presumably very strongly to the Home Secretary?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: We are in the process of doing that. To be fair, you will know that every Government has to have this sort of discussion with every Department. This year it is particularly pointed, so of course we are involved in a discussion. That is why I try not to overstate the problem. It is a concern where we are. We know the numbers are big. I can only give advice. There are political decisions to make about what is possible, given that the whole country has challenges around money.

Q26 Mr David Winnick: If a burglary occurs or a car is stolen, these may not be considered to be the most serious of crimes, but they obviously cause quite an effect on those who have been so robbed or burgled as the case may be. Do you think that people in the metropolitan area can have the same feeling of confidence now as previously that the police will investigate more or less immediately, pursue the matter?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I think so at the moment. With 32,000 cops we can hardly say that we are short of police. We have maintained that number. One of the things I have done since I have been here is said that if any member of the public, for whatever crime, wants us to go, we will go. If it is a murder they have no choice—we will turn up. For me, around the country we are at a stage where we say, “Well, we will only go to this type of crime if it is of certain seriousness”. I think if a victim wants us to go we should go. If they are a vulnerable victim—it could be someone who is older, it could be someone who has got a mental illness—it could be any reason why they expect the police to turn up, whereas somebody with a more adult, mature, confident approach may not need that. So we have

pursued that at the moment, and I think that has helped our confidence and satisfaction figures.

Q27 Mr David Winnick: Police presence on the streets.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Sorry?

Mr David Winnick: The impression is, Commissioner—and you may say this is not the position at all—that the police are far fewer in numbers than previously in many areas within the Metropolitan Police area. Could you comment on that?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I think as a matter of fact it is inaccurate. I cannot comment on their feeling if they believe that, but first of all, I have explained the overall numbers. We have reached 32,000. We have moved 2,600 officers into neighbourhood policing, so they are where people say they want to see them—walking the streets, generally. The one thing they will have seen a reduction in is the police community support officers. We had 5,000. We are down to about 1,700, and that has been one of the balancing things. We cannot have it all ways. If we want police we have had to substitute the police for CSOs, and it is a continuing challenge, but overall, I think we continue to have a high number of officers on the street.

Q28 Chair: Thank you. On the figures that Craig Mackey, your deputy, gave this Committee, in the years that we asked him to give us figures, there has been a reduction in the amount of money you have received to £300 million, but an increase in the number of police officers of 1,500. That is very strange, because normally when you have a reduction in budgets you have a reduction in police officers. How have you managed to do that?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Really by going back to the things we were talking about earlier, which is reducing the levels of management and reducing the 3,500 police staff I talked about—so less administrators, less clerks. We have outsourced—

Q29 Chair: This is managing the personnel in a more effective way?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: We used to have about 15,000 police staff, people who are not police officers—vital to us in many ways, but we thought we could manage with less—and then we have done things like re-let some contracts. For example, we have just let a contract around our human resources, finance and procurement. We have outsourced it to a contract that is already run by the Cabinet Office. That will be something that is run in Newport, as it happens. The staff may decide to move to Newport—frankly, I think many of them may not—and of course, the company who are offering this service will pay Newport salaries, which is one of the big results—

Chair: This is the Shared Services Connected Ltd contract.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: That's it.

Chair: With the saving of £100 million?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Over 10 years. I think the saving is over 10 years.

Q30 Chair: So the Government cuts have been quite helpful, because they have been able to identify circumstances where you perhaps have been overspending in certain areas and, as a result of being focused, you will have decided to save more money, so that should be quite good.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I agree. I have always acknowledged when I have come to this Committee that having less money focuses you to do things more efficiently. That is fine while it drives up efficiencies. The point is, if it eats into the meat of the organisation that would be more worrying. But I think these are sensible things.

Q31 Chair: We still have stories such as the police officers reported in the *Daily Mail* on 3 September who caught a bus in order to investigate crimes because of a shortage of police cars. At one particular station there were only two vehicles among dozens of detectives. You have not reached the stage of other areas where they are using horses and recreational horse riders to patrol the countryside, because obviously the rural areas in London are not there. How would you explain police officers catching a bus in order to deal with an investigation?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: It is not a bad thing. We have whole teams of officers who are dedicated to the buses. Getting on the bus is not a bad thing, for me. They should be patrolling the buses if they do not have a car. What I am glad about is that they did not sit at the police station and say, “I can’t get there”, which occasionally you might find. So they got on and did something. From what I could see they talked to the victim and explained how they got there and that got tweeted out, but that is fine. We have reduced some of the vehicles we have. I think we had about 6,500, and we are down to about 5,500 at the minute. One of the ways we identified them was by saying, “Hang on a minute, what is the mileage on these cars? How often are they getting used?” We found some that were getting used for less than 50 miles a week, I think it was. They were not needed when we have cars doing about 400 miles a week. So we got rid of them. Of course there will always be the odd complaint.

We have two contracts on our vehicles, so first we have the overt fleet, the uniform cars you see around the street. That is outsourced already. Turnaround in the garage is very quick. They deliver them back to the police station very quick. We do not get complaints about that. We also have a covert fleet, which is about one quarter of the fleet. These are vehicles that should not be identified as police vehicles. They are done in-house. In the future we are going to consider whether we outsource it. But on the whole they do pretty well too, so the turnaround time in the garage is good. I do not know what has happened in this case, but it should not lead to horse travel anyway at this stage.

Q32 Mr David Burrowes: On potential cuts to PCSOs, you have been very open about the potential scale of savings. Is one of the options on the table the complete removal of neighbourhood PCSO posts?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: It is certainly one thing we have to consider. I think certainly there will be still less of them. One of the things we have to consider is whether we can maintain them. One of the things that is quite difficult for me as a leader in my organisation is that I am talking about somebody’s job here. There are at least 1,700

people who are asking me personally, and collectively, “What is going to happen to my job?” We are having to consider things that previously we would not have liked to. That is clearly one of the options. We would like to maintain that if we can, but it is not easy at the moment.

Q33 Anna Turley: Commissioner, thank you for joining us. I wanted to come on to the issue of diversity but while we are on community support officers, I was very struck by the reduction in numbers that you gave us. Could you give us any indication of what you think the impact of that has been, both on the workload of your remaining workforce but also on the visibility in the community, on prevention and on some of the other benefits that they brought when we introduced them?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I suppose there are two sides to this. On one side if you look at the objective evidence, as I said earlier, the confidence and satisfaction continues to rise. So we could not say if that was the only measure that that meant that we were doing worse.

If you talk to local communities—in fact, I have a meeting tonight in Ealing for Ealing and Hounslow—every four weeks we have a sort of town hall meeting and people come along and will often say, “Well, we have lost our CSO. They are not being replaced,” and they knew them well. They walk, they talk, they meet people. So at that level they will often complain that they have lost someone. Many of the CSOs that we have lost went on to be police officers, so in one sense they were lost but in another sense they have stayed with us.

There is no doubt, I think, that if you talk to many communities they would say the CSOs were a consistent feature, often staying in an area longer than the police. They built a relationship. They did not often feel threatened by them in terms of arrest, because that wasn’t their job. So I think if you talk to people they would say they feel it is a loss, but I am afraid none of the options are ideal at the moment. So I think there is some loss.

Anna Turley: Your workforce, has there been something—

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: If you talk to police officers they will sometimes say the CSO, for example, are very helpful if you have to preserve a scene. We often lose officers every night. Say there is a stabbing: you have to preserve a scene. Maybe you have to look after the victim in hospital and make sure the attacker doesn’t come back. Often that is police officers, but sometimes the CSOs have been helpful in doing that. For example, with prevention, one of our tactics that we use is that if we get a burglary, we know that if we leaflet and warn people in that area with similar properties that the burglar will probably come back and attack them, they will take reasonable precautions. So the CSOs have been good at getting leaflets out while the officers get on and investigate. There is no doubt that over time we do lose that capacity.

They are good at road closures. We have big marches in London, or football matches, and if you want to close a road and make sure nobody drives down it you put a barrier there. They have been helpful in doing that sort of thing too. So there is no doubt that some of

those responsibilities will shift to the police, and they will say, “I wish we didn’t have to do some of these jobs”.

Q34 Anna Turley: I think that is my concern when we are talking about resource allocation—is it more expensive to use a police officer’s time to do some of those things than it would have been for a community support officer?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: It can be. There is no easy way to do this. The thing is that if you have to use a police officer occasionally to close a road, which is not very efficient, for the other 90%-odd of the time I can use them to investigate crime, on a public disorder or to arrest people. So I get more flexibility, although it is more costly, for a police officer; I get less flexibility, even though it is cheaper, for CSOs. So striking that balance is something we are trying to do at the moment.

Q35 Anna Turley: Thank you very much.

I wanted to ask about diversity, which is linked to CSOs again. CSOs were, I think, perhaps more representative of the broader London population statistically. At the moment we know 12% of your officers are from BME backgrounds, compared to 40% of the broader population of London. Has that had an impact on your diversity, and could you give us a general update on progress towards getting a more diverse workforce, particularly in the light of the pilot I think you had in July based around second languages?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: In terms of the Met, it has been true for many years that we have two broad groups of people. We have better representation in one group and do less well in the other. Actually, there are three groups—we have the police staff we talked about earlier, the special constables we have who are volunteers but vitally important to us, and as you said the CSOs, who have very good representation. So for police staff it is about one in four—25%. For CSOs it is about a third, one in three. For specials it is about one in four. The distinction between them and the police officers is that on the whole, those first three groups are all Londoners. If you are a special, on the whole you are going to live in London. You are not going to travel from Essex. Some do, but on the whole they are Londoners. Police staff, again, are Londoners. For police officers, as you said, 12%—a historical legacy. We have shifted it radically over the last 10 years, I think from 3% up to 12%.

In our most recent recruiting, as you indicated, we are doing our best to improve it again. At the moment we are getting one in four or one in three, depending on which cohort—I will explain very briefly. There are different cohorts. The first attempt we had was about six months ago, and we are still keeping on with London residency. So we say, “If you live in London, and have for three of the last six years, you are more likely to understand the diversity of this place”. A by-product for us is that frankly, we get better representation, and you do not have to buy a house, which is very expensive. So that residency test that has driven us up to about one in four.

We have just had a pilot, as you have indicated, on second language. So just in one month we had, I think, about 1,200 people—but we can give you the figures—who applied with

one of 14 languages as a second language. Those were picked based on the most usual languages in London, and that gave us two thirds of the applicants who were from BMEs. We are not yet at the end of how many we have taken, so I cannot give you the latest figure, but it is a radical shift from, as you have indicated, the 12%.

We are proud of what we have achieved, but what we have had to do over time—previous members of the Committee will probably have heard me say this—is that the Met has recruited from all over the UK. Our pool has been Scots, Irish people, people from all over the place, which is great, representing the minority population we see in London. So we have accepted them with great satisfaction, but we have not represented London in our pool of selection. By the residency test we have created another filter, and our language test looks as though it could have been helpful, but it hasn't been without challenge. Some people say they don't agree with it.

Q36 Anna Turley: Obviously we have talked about the impact of cuts as well. Do you think the impact of cuts has affected your ability to recruit? If there isn't as much of an in-flow of new officers, is that affecting your ability to make your work force—

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: It didn't until about now. As I say, because we have been able to get back our numbers, we have recruited about 3,500. So we have not had an opportunity to change. We don't lose many people every year. Our main opportunity to change is to recruit. We lose about 1,800 police officers, about 5%. Our turnover is very, very low. To put it very succinctly, if we lose about 1,000 officers a year over the next few years, which is possible with the money we are talking about, we still think we might be able to recruit 600 a year, which gives us some opportunity to change. That is nowhere near what we would like to be, at 3,500 a year, but we are going to have to live with what we have. This Committee will have heard me argue before—and I am not going to do it now—about the Northern Ireland option of 50:50. Northern Ireland saw a radical change when the law changed, and that is not accepted.

Q37 Chair: Thank you. We have had that in evidence.

We have three more quick topics to cover but on diversity, does the Gurpal Viridi case cause you disappointment when you see an officer say that there has been a vendetta against him over a number of years? This is not the first ethnic minority officer who has said that. He talked about a culture within the Met that is racist, and we know from hearing your evidence in the past that you will not tolerate racism within the Met. Why do people say these things about the Met, and what is being done to try to deal with this issue? Just to say we want more officers is not the answer, is it?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: No, we do—

Chair: It is talking about a culture.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: No, I agree, and it is not the only thing we are doing. Recruitment is one thing, but we are trying by promoting more people from minorities as well as women, so getting a more representative workforce. My management board is

about half women, and we have one minority senior police officer. It is the case that we are getting more people to progress quicker, and secondly—

Q38 Chair: Sure. Do cases like that disappoint you? Do they damage the reputation of the Met?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I think certainly the claims that are made—of course I would be disappointed about that. People will know that there is quite a long history with this particular now ex-officer, and there was a criminal allegation some time ago, which was investigated and the court found this officer not guilty. He has made a complaint about the way that was investigated. The IPCC have referred it as a local investigation, which they may wish to reflect on at some stage, but at the moment we are talking to his lawyers about how we will progress that enquiry.

One thing on that case: as you have indicated already, Chairman—I will not go into the detail—that was subject of a public complaint, not a police complaint.

Chair: Yes, that is right. Mr Berry, on this point?

Q39 James Berry: Yes. To declare an interest, I prosecuted police misconduct cases on your behalf against Met police officers. Can you confirm that almost without fail, Met police officers who are found by panels to have acted in a racist manner, both to colleagues and members of the public, are dismissed from your force?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Yes, that is my expectation, and certainly while I have been here I cannot think of a case—we might find one, but that has not happened.

Chair: Maybe it was because of the quality of the advocate who was presenting the case.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Well, if you got me on to that I would argue for lawyers—and I know there are a lot in the room—not to be involved in misconduct cases, but there you are, I will not press that just yet.

Chair: Very wise.

Q40 Victoria Atkins: Commissioner, I am a self-declared lawyer.

Just picking up on this topic of diversity within the police force, on the subject of counter-terrorism, of course we are not striving for diversity in the police force because we want the figures to look good on paper. It is because of the practical impact we think having a diverse police force will have on measures such as counter-terrorism and engagement with communities that may be involved in extremism. Is that not right?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: It is. People say it is about political correctness. It is not. First of all, this city needs diversity, in the sense that at an intuitive level, if every officer you deal with is white, you might think we do not understand some things. I think there is that intuitive level. Practically, I was out with one of our surveillance squads last week, and we still seem to have quite a lot of white men in that squad. Now in the area they were going

to go on to in that operation, they would have stood out quite a lot actually—as would some of the vehicles they had, but that is for another day. My point is that there is a very practical reason why we need to represent society, and we don't always, so it has both a principles reason and a very pragmatic one too.

Q41 Victoria Atkins: Developing a theme of engaging the communities, Commander Richard Walton, head of Scotland's SO15 counter-terrorism unit, said recently that great ideas were emerging from Muslim youth forums being held at Scotland Yard on how to combat extremist material online. Are there any plans that you are aware of to roll that out to other parts of the country?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Certainly it is available if people think it is worthwhile, and I think we have had two big events. One was around Islamism. That is what the forum was about. It included non-Muslim young people as well as Muslims, but essentially Muslims. That seemed to be quite productive, and it is an ongoing relationship. Secondly, we had a festival that seemed to attract an awful lot of attention. Thousands of people came to that, and we are going to promote that. To be fair I am sure there are places like West Yorkshire where we could learn things too, but I hope that that engagement, particularly with young people, is a good thing that we would like to promote further.

Q42 Victoria Atkins: We know the role that social media plays, sadly, in encouraging extremism. What more can internet companies do to help you and your colleagues tackle extremism and terrorism across the country?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: They do help to some extent. We have some challenges with them—mainly not the ones based in the UK, frankly—in some of our operations. Where they have been helpful is in taking down some of the literature on the internet, which has been intended to cause extremism and radicalism or radicalise. At the moment our CITRU hub, which works together with the Security Service and the Home Office, is taking down 1,000 sites a week, and even then it is not really making a massive impact. You have now seen that Europe has taken this on as an idea, and they are going to try and work across Europe to take it down.

But the internet, as we know, is the best thing. When we do that the internet sites are pretty helpful on those. We have two levels that we work with them on. One is about radicalising material—so beheading videos and things of that nature—and the other is in particular investigations where we seek to collect evidence, and then we seek their assistance in every way possible. Because of the communications data issues, that has not been straightforward either in this country or, probably more importantly, through America and Europe.

Q43 Victoria Atkins: What is being done to counter the portrayal by extremists that life with Daesh or the so-called ISIL in Syria is somehow idyllic? What are we doing to counter that very false message?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: The police get involved in the Prevent part of the counter-terrorism strategy. I think there is only so much the police can do. I think others have to play their part too, from Governments to local authorities, and the Muslim faith itself in what it is prepared to say.

Of course, when a police officer speaks, sometimes people think we approach it from an investigative point of view. Are we giving general advice or are we just talking as an investigator? We do an awful lot of work on the Prevent side, including, for example, the Channel process. Particular young people are guided towards that process where they are thought to be at risk, and we work with schools. So these are the major ways in which we try to get over the message. We just have to be a little bit careful, particularly in schools and places of faith, that we are not seen to be part of the state manipulating the population. We are there to provide advice. I think there is always a debate about who provides that advice.

Q44 Victoria Atkins: Finally, how does the terrorism threat to London, and indeed from London rolling out across the country, have an impact on the day-to-day task of policing in the capital?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: It is embedded, I think, in everything we do. So a lot of the intelligence we get starts out from community officers who are talking to people, and people will tell them things. They may then become an informant who is handed over to someone else to work with, but that initial contact is vital. It helps us to talk to people who might spot people who are becoming radicalised, so it is vital in that area.

We have Prevent officers, who are officers dedicated to turning people round and spotting people who are becoming problems, particularly young people. We are working more and more with families. I think we now have seven cases going through the courts in London. I will check the numbers but I think it is over 20—at least 28—across the rest of the country, where care proceedings have been taken against families and parents who appear to be have taken or are thinking about taking their children to warzones. I saw one case recently where there was an arrest on return. I find that situation impossible to understand, but the courts are having to consider how they deal with the care of those young people. It is another big way that we are intervening. Of course we have the Pursue part, which is to lock up the terrorists when we think they are going to hurt people.

Q45 Victoria Atkins: I said “finally” before, but really finally. Obviously we have heard about the cuts and the challenges that you are facing in terms of managing funding. To put the positive side of the story, it is right, isn’t it, that since you have been Commissioner crime has gone down in the metropolitan area? So despite these challenges—

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Yes, it has gone down by 18.5% as of this morning, although in the last few months there has just been a little bit of a blip. If you remember the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, set us a 20/20/20 challenge, which was 20% less money—well, that was easy, because we did not get it; 20% more confidence, which we have improved, but we do not have it at 20%, to be fair; and 20% less crime, which we got to 19.9%, but then suddenly we got a bit of a blip, so we have not quite hit the five-year target but we are nearly there.

Chair: There are four days to go until your anniversary, so there is a chance of doing that.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Yes, I know. Well, I have had a word, but—

Q46 Chair: Before we go to Mr Loughton, just on terrorism, is there any anecdotal evidence that ISIL/Daesh is smuggling people back into the country as part of the migrant crisis, as has been explained and mentioned by commentators? Yes or no, do you have any—

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Not as far as I am aware. The risk is obvious.

Q47 Chair: When you appeared before us in March of this year, when we took evidence about the three girls who had gone to Istanbul and then to Syria from the east end, you said that if they were to return they would not face charges. Is that still the case for young people who go abroad—are lured abroad—and then come back here, or not?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: It depends on the evidence. If you look at that particular case—it is probably not wise to talk too much about particular cases, but of course it depends on the behaviour—I think what we were trying to set out was that, particularly with young people, you might treat them initially more as a victim rather than as an offender. So with a 10-year-old travelling, you might immediately imagine, “Well, they are not going to be a terrorist”. The older the person, the more that has to be examined, and of course, if they arrive as a victim and then become a terrorist, they will have to have the full weight of the law fall upon them. In these cases it is not always easy to spot: what were they doing in Syria? We know why they went—they certainly went—but we don’t know what they did. So the big thing is to investigate on their return.

Q48 Tim Loughton: Commissioner, can I just briefly touch on two subjects that are unrelated and we have not covered so far? One is Operation Yewtree and the second is the IPCC.

The CSE, which this Committee takes very seriously, has continued to dominate the headlines, and we have seen a number of high-profile people in the frame and the subject of police investigations, including in some cases police statements being made outside their homes that have not so far resulted in charges being laid. Of course, this Committee previously looked at one high-profile celebrity who was under investigation for a long time, no charges were laid and there was found to be no case against him. Do you think we are in danger of diluting the seriousness of these investigations by a tendency for it to be caricatured as a witch hunt, and do we have the balance right?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: They are really difficult cases for lots of reasons. One is that often the complainant, the victim, says that they were not listened to 30 years ago—“And now you are just about not to listen to me again”. We have to investigate. As I said before on this, there is no statute of limitations. We have no option. We have to at least consider the possibility a crime was committed.

The second difficulty is that obviously things that are very old are very difficult to investigate. I actually sent more resources in to something that happened last night. Witnesses who seem incredibly credible we have to corroborate. I am afraid the corroboration is hard, because sometimes the witnesses are vague about some very important details—dates, times, places—and you might say, “Surely people know where this happened”. Often a child’s memory is difficult. We can all imagine when we were

nine to 15 years old, some of the things we thought were accurate become challenging when we arrive back at the street where we thought it happened. Many witnesses are abroad. In some of the investigations that you refer to, significant witnesses have been abroad and, frankly, do not want to know. We go to people and say, "Is this involving you?" and they say, "Even if it was, I don't want to discuss it. I have a new life".

So those have been some of the challenges along the way, and our dilemma is, when do you say to a victim, "Enough is enough"? When do you say, "I am sorry, but we cannot substantiate your claims. We don't ignore what you are saying, but it is hard to substantiate", so it is difficult. Finally, what is difficult for us is to talk in public in each case about some of the dilemmas we face, but we still should be held to account for it.

Q49 Tim Loughton: But notwithstanding all that—and we agree these are deeply complex and historic cases—do you think the balance has not been achieved? Clearly with difficult witnesses and difficult evidence to make stick if that evidence is there, should there be greater sensitivities about putting the alleged perpetrators in the frame in such a high-profile way as has been happening in certain cases?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Our general policy is not to name the suspect before charge. We have been challenged about that by the press. Sometimes they would like us to name people before charge, and we say we don't, with some exceptions. So one exception is that if you have a murderer on the loose and they have murdered one person and you think they are en route to murder someone else, you may publish an image and say, "Right, we want to find them".

The second type of case—and I think we can talk about the Savile case—is where things seem so overwhelmingly obvious it would be almost foolish to disregard what everybody seems to know. So sometimes we will do that, but usually on arrest the only thing we will say—you usually see these terms—is, "We arrested a man in Ayrshire, 57 years old", and that is it. What the journalist want us to do is confirm that is the man we arrested, because what they want us to do is protect them against defamation. They are not too interested in what we have found. They want us to protect against defamation.

I think it is now possible to talk about the Harris case, where for many months we were pushed to agree that he was a suspect and declined that opportunity. We said, "If you think you know what is going to happen, you are journalists, you decide to do it". They declined—on their lawyers' good advice, I suspect. Sometimes we are portrayed as people who put it into the public domain. I would argue that if an officer does that, that is wrong. It should not happen, and we will investigate it. We will generally not confirm except on the two occasions I have mentioned.

Q50 Tim Loughton: Is Yewtree continuing to take a very large part of your resources, or have we plateaued or reduced?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I cannot say it has lowered, but if you look at Yewtree/Midland, I think at the moment there are about 30 detectives and more support people. You could look at hacking, which we discussed at this Committee before: I think at one stage we had 200. We are now down to about 50 people. The Met has always had—

as other forces have had—historic, big things that they have to invest people in. Over time it flexes.

In a new world where funding may change, I think we are going to have to proportion our resources to investigate historical things. Frankly, it will mean that we will do it, but it will take longer, and we are going to have to be open with people at the beginning about that. Of course, whether it be a parliamentary furore or a press one, it is very hard to resist these things. People say, “Why the hell haven’t you just got around to talking to people?” Well, the answer is, “Because it takes resources”.

Q51 Tim Loughton: Finally, on IPCC, I should declare an interest because I am the subject of a complaint to the IPCC. I have had complaints from police commissioners, among others, that the IPCC is exceedingly inefficient in its investigations and expects an awful lot of police forces to do the work for it, and also that there has appeared to be excessive pursuit of making allegations that have turned out to be completely bogus stick against police officers. Yet there seems to be an agenda, a vendetta in some cases, being pursued by the IPCC. Is that fair comment?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I think I am going to decline the opportunity to criticise the people who hold me to account from time to time. To be fair to them, for many years they have had inadequate resources, and the Government has addressed that over the last two years so they are now getting more resources. Of course, they have the money but they have to get the people. That is going to help them, and they are going to be expected to take more work on. But what I can agree on is that there are many complaints around the country, and it takes too long. The cause of that, whether it is an inefficiency or lack of resource, I am not in a position to judge, but you often hear that both from the complainant and from the officer.

Q52 Tim Loughton: How many IPCC complaints have you had in the Met in the last five years or so, very roughly? Is it going up or—

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I could not tell you, but we can discover it. Of course they get public complaints sometimes from officers, but they have public complaints that they either investigate themselves, of which they do relatively few, or hand to the force or arrange for another force to investigate. I think on the whole we have had a fairly flat view of the complaints, with a slight decline in the last year, I believe, but I will need to check that for you.

Tim Loughton: It will be interesting, because I think it might be the subject of further work by the Committee.

Chair: It will be very helpful. We will be looking at this again.

Mr Berry has a very short question.

Q53 James Berry: You might not be willing to give your own personal view on the IPCC, but can you confirm that there is a lack of confidence in the IPCC among police officers?

Chair: Yes or no will do.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I will decline that opportunity. I will give the same answer—that I think there are some people who would prefer that they were quicker. I do not think they would decline that criticism, but generally I think it is for others to have a view on their efficiency based on the evidence they have. I do not think the people who are investigating are the best placed to do that. They can tell you how they feel about their individual case, but I do not think it is the best way to drill down into an organisation by giving little anecdotes.

Chair: Thank you. Mr Burrowes has the final question, on stop and search.

Q54 Mr David Burrowes: Yes. You noted in June the increase in stabbings across London, in Enfield and elsewhere, such as Marcel Addai of Hoxton, tragically killed two days ago. There have been stop and search reductions over the year—in Enfield, some 215 less stop and searches. You have made a link. What have you done about it? You mentioned that we are getting to the stage where people think they can carry knives with impunity, and that cannot be good for anyone. Have we got to that stage? What are we doing about it?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: The first thing is, for members of the Committee who were not here before, that we did significantly reduce stop and search by about two thirds, and yet we still saw less violence and we made more arrests, so we targeted it better. We saw less complaints and better disproportionality, so I think we improved it. However, there was some evidence that that had gone too far. We have seen more stabbings, and we are seeing some serious violence increase. So we did two things at once. One was start to increase stop-search since May/June. We are starting to see that rise again. The second was that we have reinforced or reinvigorated the gang work. The gangs command have gone after the gangs. I think I might have said—actually, I did not say it here before—that there was a danger that what they started to do was get into the longer-term jobs. What the gangs command have been very good at is going after the 14 to 24-year-olds and locking them up quickly where they were hurting people. The danger is that some of these people are involved in supplying drugs to people, and an investigator will say, “That is a really interesting job. We will just let it run a little bit longer”. If you do that, the danger is of course that someone gets hurt in that time. So we have had to look again at that and the stop-search, and we have seen in these last three months more stop-search and more arrests from it.

Q55 Mr David Burrowes: On the locking up part, you supported mandatory sentencing for the second conviction. We are still in early days seeing how that impacts. Would you want to go further and support mandatory sentencing on the first conviction?

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: I do not think so. To be fair, it took quite a while to get this first statute passed. Everybody could support it. I think it is a good way of sending a good signal. I thought we saw with gun crime that a minimum mandatory sentence did stop people carrying guns. Everybody understood: five years. “You carry a gun, you are going to go to prison for five years”. Gangs understood it—a very simple message. So I think we need to get a simple message over, but the best simple way to do that is for judges to sentence according to that guideline. We need the evidence to accumulate for the people

who are going to get the sentences. If you remember—I was in Merseyside at the time—when the mandatory sentence for guns came in, the average sentence was, I think, only 32 months, whereas the minimum was supposed to be five years. There is some evidence that the judiciary took a little time to apply the standards that the Government had set into statute and used the exclusion accord too often. So I think we need to see how the evidence accumulates, but we are keeping an eye on it.

Chair: Commissioner, thank you very much. As usual, if you could let us have that written information as soon as possible, I would be very grateful.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe: Of course.

Chair: Thank you very much.