

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Appointment of the HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, HC 1071

Wednesday 23 March 2022

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Members present: Tim Loughton (Chair); Lee Anderson; Paula Barker; Simon Fell; Gary Sambrook; Matt Vickers.

Questions 1-36

Witness

[I](#): Andrew Cooke QPM, Government's preferred candidate.

Examination of Witness

Witness: Andrew Cooke.

Chair: Mr Cooke, you are very welcome. We are starting slightly early, such has been the efficiency of the chairing of our pre-meeting.

This is one of the three posts for which the Committee has a role in holding confirmatory hearings. At the end of this, we will report to the Home Secretary about whether we agree with her recommendation of you as the preferred candidate for the role of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Chief Fire and Rescue Inspector.

I see that we are joined in the Public Gallery by your predecessor; we shall see whether there is going to be any back-seat driving, but you are very welcome, Sir Tom.

Andrew Cooke: He is here purely as a spectator.

Q1 **Chair:** We thought we had seen the last of Sir Tom when we had him in front of us recently.

Shall we start with some very general questions? Isn't appointing a chief constable to the role of inspecting other chief constables really a question of marking your own homework—unlike the case with your predecessor, who came from a completely different discipline?

Andrew Cooke: No, I do not believe so.

Chair: Sorry—before I start, I have to ask Paula Barker to make a disclosure of interest.

Paula Barker: I just want to say that Andy Cooke and I know each other. Andy was the chief constable in Merseyside, where my constituency of Liverpool, Wavertree is.

Chair: Sorry, Mr Cooke—carry on.

Andrew Cooke: I think it is more important to look at the individual rather than the individual's previous career. Yes, I was 36 years in policing before I came to the inspectorate, where I have been for 12 months now. During that time, though, my mantra was always to put the community first. It is not about protecting the police or fire service; it is about ensuring that we are doing all we can for the safety of our communities. My vision in Merseyside police was putting the community first in everything that we do. That has not changed since I have been at HMI.

I have shown my independence in the last 12 months; if you speak to the chief constables of Greater Manchester or Cleveland, I am sure they will agree that I have been challenging and independent when dealing with issues in those forces. I intend to carry on in very much the same way.

As I say, the issue is about maintaining community confidence, and communities will always come first for me. I am a proud public servant

and hopefully I will be a proud public servant within HMI, doing everything I can to keep those communities safe.

- Q2 **Chair:** You had 36 years in the police service, coming up through the ranks and serving in a number of different policing roles. I notice also that your outside interests are dominated by policing concerns—police charities and others—as well. Have you not had enough of it?

Andrew Cooke: I don't think I could ever have enough of what was for me a vocation as a police officer. Since I was about six or seven years old, it was all I wanted to do. I believe I did a lot to keep people safe during that time, but I am intelligent enough and my values are deep enough to ensure that, despite the friendships I had at that time, I am now in a different role. That role is to vigorously inspect on the public's behalf how well the fire service and police service are performing. I will never shy away from that. The important thing, as I will continue to maintain, is that this is about protecting our communities, not organisations.

- Q3 **Chair:** Who is your boss? Who inspects the inspector?

Andrew Cooke: I am independent. Obviously, the Home Secretary and others can commission me. I will have discussions and regular meetings with the permanent secretary at the Home Office. But because of the role that I am in, my boss is the public—I am totally beholden to them for what I do. I am totally beholden to the seven principles of public life, which I adhere to, and I will continue to do so.

In reality, I do not have a boss. I have someone who looks after my pay and rations, the HR for the organisation, and similar tasks. But no, the public is my boss.

- Q4 **Chair:** Do you think that the public, by and large, would concur with your comment that violent criminals are inherently not bad people?

Andrew Cooke: That was part of a longer article, and that part was misquoted. I never said that violent people were not inherently bad people; what I said was that a lot of criminality came as a result of poverty and lack of opportunity, and that a lot of people would take a different path if there were a greater levelling up across some of our inner-city communities. I hold to that point. It is something that I have said for the past 10 or 11 years. We all need to keep working to ensure that there is greater equality in our societies.

Some criminals are not bad people. Unfortunately, if we look at the prison population, a lot have mental health issues. Some are evil, some are bad, but I have spent 36 years on this, a lot of that on the frontline—I was a constable for 10 years and a detective constable alongside that, dealing with some of the worst things in society and with things that I wish I had never seen—and I am intelligent enough to identify the fact that a lot of people could also be saved from that lifestyle if at times we took a different approach to increase opportunity.

I fully stand by my comment. I never said that violent criminals were not bad people; I said that not all criminals were necessarily bad people.



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- Q5 **Chair:** Do you also stand by the comment that you were reported as making, when you said that if you had £5 billion, you would spend £1 billion on policing and £4 billion on poverty?

Andrew Cooke: The full quote was that, after the 20,000 police officer uplift, if I had £5 billion, I would put £4 billion—predominantly, to be honest—into inner-city areas to try to level up that lack of fairness and of opportunity, and to reduce some of the worst poverty issues in our communities. I am a police officer—I was a police officer—and I am there to protect life and property. That is what I did for 36 years, prior to coming to the inspectorate. I have seen the impact that that can have. I have good lived experience of what that is, and I think that gives me the right to comment.

I will say, Chair, that I have never been afraid to speak out. That is one of the reasons why I believe that I will be a good chief inspector. As a chief constable, I was happy to speak out if I thought things were wrong. Surely that is what the public want to hear, even if at times I am not right.

- Q6 **Chair:** Do you think other chief constables share that view? How would they react to the suggestion that their budget should be redirected into anti-poverty measures, rather than direct policing?

Andrew Cooke: Each chief constable needs to make their own decision on that. I am fully aware that a number of them agree with what I say, and I am sure that a number do not agree with what I say, but it is all about making sure that that balance is right between enforcement, increasing opportunity, reducing poverty and making sure that every young person in this country has a relatively equal chance of progression.

- Q7 **Chair:** Do you think that you should be inspecting constabularies not on conventional measures of numbers of police officers, success in clearing crime, the numbers of people they have had prosecuted, or whatever, but on encouraging and perhaps looking to mark chief constables better if they show initiative in social deprivation alleviation measures?

Andrew Cooke: Prevention is one of the first and most important parts of policing. Whatever way chief constables manage that prevention is really important. But please do not get the wrong idea about me: as chief constable in Merseyside, I had the highest detection rate of any metropolitan force in the country; for each year that I was chief, we were graded the highest grade by HMI, as a police force; and I spent part of my career dealing with organised criminality and tackling the worst types of criminal, which I was proud to do—I will always be proud to do that.

I am concerned about low detection rates across the country at the moment. They need to improve, and that is something that I will be driving as chief HMI, should I be given the opportunity to be so. So, no, we need to go right across the police service, but there is an element of policing that is getting back to basics a bit—reduction, prevention and detection.

- Q8 **Chair:** I should have mentioned at the outset that I am not Diana



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Johnson—apologies from our Chair, who is, alas, stricken with covid this week. You are having to put up with me, I am afraid.

Andrew Cooke: After 30-odd years as a detective, Chair, I had noticed.

Chair: Well done! Extra brownie point.

- Q9 **Gary Sambrook:** You clearly have considerable experience in policing, but not so much in fire and rescue. What sort of areas of knowledge and skills do you think you will have to develop quickly?

Andrew Cooke: I have now spent 12 months as an HMI looking after the fire services across the north of England, and I am still learning about those organisations. I have some very good advisers both within the inspectorate and outside. I have good relationships with a number of chief fire officers following meetings I have had as part of inspections, and I am never slow to take advice in relation to it. I have more to learn.

As part of my own continuous professional development, I need to continue to learn more about the fire service. Part of what I intend to do in my first three months is to have many meetings with the National Fire Chiefs Council and hopefully with the Minister for fire and others to make sure that my knowledge is as good as it can be. I will continue to learn and continue to develop in that role because, although I know an awful lot more about policing, I have some knowledge of fire—but I need to develop it.

- Q10 **Gary Sambrook:** What specific areas of fire and rescue do you think you need to brush up on most?

Andrew Cooke: The actual role of the firefighter, I think. I know Sir Tom mentioned in the “State of Fire and Rescue” report about actually defining what the role of the firefighter is, because it means a lot of different things to different people. I am still learning about the different governance types that we have around fire—obviously, with the NFCC, county councils and fire authorities. That governance side is something I am still learning about. I have a reasonable knowledge throughout because of the first 12 months, but there is still more that I need to find out.

- Q11 **Gary Sambrook:** You have been named in some newspapers as a contender to replace Dame Cressida Dick as Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service. Owing to your experience in tackling violent crime, are you interested in that role, and will you take it if you are offered it?

Andrew Cooke: No, I am committed to this current role. That is why I joined the inspectorate. I think I can make a bigger difference across policing and the fire service right across the country by undertaking this role in a professional, credible and independent way. I am proud to be the preferred candidate for this role. This is the role that I want, and this is the role that I am looking to continue.

- Q12 **Gary Sambrook:** In a previous answer, you were talking about your independence of thought. Can you give us more examples of how you



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think you can demonstrate independence in this role?

Andrew Cooke: Although we are commissioned by the Home Secretary and others in relation to what we do, whatever I say are my own words and whatever my fellow HMIs say will be their own words. While we can be commissioned to look at certain things, the reports that we write will always be independent, and I will vigorously defend that level of independence to speak truth to power.

As I have said before, we need to be heard. The public need to hear what we are saying. It will not always be something that makes the Government or the police or fire service happy, but I will go back to where I started from and say my commitment is to our communities in relation to this role. That independence, which is also enshrined in law, I will vigorously maintain, and I will ensure that my fellow HMIs vigorously maintain it as well.

In my dealings with Greater Manchester fire service and Greater Manchester police, I have challenged them on numerous occasions in relation to some of the practices there, and I have not been slow to do so. As I mentioned before, if you speak to the chiefs of the forces who are currently engaged with us, they will give you a view that I am very independent and very challenging.

Q13 **Simon Fell:** How will you ensure that your work carries sufficient weight within the Home Office?

Andrew Cooke: Professionalism, and ensuring that what we say is correct; that the evidence that we gather is triangulated; that as an inspectorate we shine a light on the right issues in the first place—the issues that matter to the public; that I, when I am representing the organisation, am seen as totally credible and independent, with good knowledge of what I speak about; and that I hold my corner as well, because there are plenty of people who will pressurise the chief inspector and inspectorate of constabulary to change their view. If I believe that the view that I have taken is right, no matter who it will upset, I have the courage to say it and to stand by it.

Q14 **Simon Fell:** There is a difference between being listened to and being heard. On hearing from Sir Tom in the past, we know there is a challenge there in the Home Office. What would you hope to do differently or develop that might make that relationship perhaps work a little bit better?

Andrew Cooke: I think I already have good stakeholder relationships in Government, with both Ministers and civil servants. I have good relationships with regional leaders around the country as well. We are not a regulator. We are an inspectorate. We cannot make anybody do anything; we can only identify what we believe needs to be done.

That comes back to the fact that if we are professional and credible in what we say, and if there is an evidence base behind what we say, it is very much incumbent on those organisations and individuals to listen to



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what we are saying. Where we can improve is in getting the public to better listen to what we say. We have done a lot of work over the last 12 months to improve our media approach—we are on social media more than previously, which is a good thing and a bad thing. Getting our voice heard by the public is critical.

Getting our stakeholders, for want of a better word—Ministers and others—to follow the path that we recommend to them is something that I will vigorously follow up on each and every occasion. I am aware of a number of recommendations that we have made over the last few years that have not been carried out. My role as chief inspector is to ensure that those recommendations are pushed, because that goes to the very heart of the credibility of the inspectorate.

Q15 Simon Fell: Do you have any particular concerns about the role that you would like to change?

Andrew Cooke: No, I do not. I have been HMI for 12 months, and I have enjoyed doing what I do. I work with some very professional people. Sir Tom left the organisation in a good state—it moved on tremendously during his tenure. Although, as we move forward, there will obviously be things that I will want to change internally and externally, we are on a very sound footing.

Q16 Simon Fell: What does success look like for you?

Andrew Cooke: Success looks like improvements to the fire service and the police service—not short-term improvement, but long-lasting improvement. It is increased confidence in policing and fire to keep our communities safe. Internally, it is also about people wanting to work for Her Majesty's Inspectorate. We have 270 people working there at the moment, and a budget of £22 million. I want good people to come and work in the inspectorate; I want good people to ensure that—in relation to your earlier point—our voice is being heard, and that it is heard from credible people who are professional in what they do.

Q17 Simon Fell: Where do you think key stakeholder confidence in the inspectorate and its staff is, and how would you aim to improve it?

Andrew Cooke: For police and fire, it depends on whether they have had a good or bad report. Overall—I will give my view on policing first—there is respect for the inspectorate. It has gone through some rocky times over the past 15 or 20 years, but that respect is there—the inspectorate has been seen as a credible voice.

We have been inspecting fire only for the last three years. That is building up, but we are seeing definite improvements in the way that fire services are delivering their services. The feedback that we have had consistently from the fire service so far—depending on the report—is that they fully support the direction that we are taking and accept the issues that we are finding. It is important that we shine a light on the right issues.

Wider than that, in Government and in Parliament, we are seen as a credible voice. The public is where the work needs to be done, because not



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enough of the public know about what we do and how we do it, and that is always going to be a challenge for an inspectorate. That is something that I will be working on over the next few years.

- Q18 **Lee Anderson:** Hello, Mr Cooke. The roles of police officer and firefighter have changed significantly, certainly during my lifetime. How do you think those roles will change over the coming years, and how will you change?

Andrew Cooke: I think the first issue is the increasing speed of technology. Both policing and fire need to keep up with that technology. To look at policing first, we have seen some big investments in technology by criminals and state actors across the world. Policing has not been quick enough to address some of those issues. We have had some good results—Operation Venetic, which was the big operation on phones recently, had some great results. More widely, police technology itself needs to improve more. I think that the younger police officers are far more tech savvy than the likes of me and others, and take to it much more quickly. You can see that there is positive change, but, for me, it is too slow.

On the role of a police officer, that is a really good, wide question, because, similarly to fire, it needs to be properly defined—what policing is here for, at the moment. Policing is doing an awful lot of work in relation to mental health. Up to 40% of response officers' time is taken up with mental health. An awful lot of police officers' time is taken up looking for children who are missing from home or absent from care. If that is what the public and Parliament want policing to do, that is fine, but you must bear in mind that while they are doing that, they are not doing the other things that they should be doing, such as detecting, reducing and preventing crime, and so on. On that very wide scope that policing has, a decision must be made about what we want from our police service and whether other agencies need to step into some parts of that sphere.

There are a number of challenges around the fire service. Much like in policing, diversity is an issue. I think that 7% of actual firefighters are women, which is far too low; although females are in 17% of roles, most of those are not actually firefighters. The diversity of both police and fire is not where it needs to be, and that needs to be increased in both services—and quickly, because neither is representative of their communities.

In the future, I hope both policing and fire look different, but there are different challenges, too. Sir Tom has made the point that we need to define the role of a firefighter now, never mind in the future. There is an awful lot more work to do around that, because that recommendation has not been taken up yet, and we await the White Paper.

- Q19 **Lee Anderson:** I guess what I was getting at was that, in my patch, it is not very often that firefighters have to go to a fire any more. It is a completely different job from what it was 30 years ago. Do you see a way that there could be some joint working between police and the fire service?



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Andrew Cooke: I think there is joint working going on between the police and the fire service—and all blue light services—in relation to some of the work that firefighters have been doing, such as attending to people who have cardiac arrests, and so on, and widening that role. I think that the key role, at the moment, for firefighters, is very much around that protection and prevention.

Protection is in relation to buildings; obviously, we all know about the Grenfell issues, and what has emanated from that. Services across the board are actually pushing forward very quickly to ensure that those issues are sorted out. On prevention, some services are better than others in ensuring that people are properly protected in their houses, and in looking at the most vulnerable and where those fires will start.

You are right, however: there are far fewer fires now than there used to be, so, again, that role of the firefighter needs to be looked at, in total, to see whether we are doing the right things. Police, fire and crime commissioners are one way of bringing the two sides together. I know that a number of control rooms are shared across the country by police and fire. Are there further opportunities? Yes, I am sure there are, and they are opportunities that need to be taken.

Q20 **Lee Anderson:** Finally, if I gave you a magic wand to wave, what would you do with it to make our police force and fire service much better?

Andrew Cooke: I would use a different magic wand from the one that the Chair waved before for the £5 billion. What would I do? I would love for people to actually understand and respect the role of police officers and firefighters perhaps more than they do. Confidence, particularly in policing, has been badly shaken over the last 12 to 18 months. In my previous life, I saw what an exceptional job many police officers did on a daily basis in keeping people safe—they were heroic and professional. However, sadly, a small number of people are not fit to wear the uniform and, sadly, we have seen numerous issues concerning that recently. So, with a magic wand, I would make those people disappear.

Q21 **Chair:** Before I come to Paula Barker, were those people—the bad apples—in the force when you were there, Mr Cooke? If so, why has there been such an impact on public confidence—I think most of us would agree with you on that—over the last 12 to 18 months? Is it because they have been publicly uncovered more and that they just went unnoticed before because a blind eye was turned or whatever? What has made the difference?

Andrew Cooke: I think society is far more open now than it was. On the quality of recruits now compared with when I was a young police officer, when I was a young police officer working in inner-city Liverpool, there were some horrendous people in policing. They were dealt with in different ways. When they were sacked, they were sacked quietly. Now, policing advertises, and I was really proud to advertise when we ourselves identified corruption and when we ourselves advertised those who preyed on vulnerable people, because we should be telling the public that. No



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chief constable or chief fire officer in this country should ever allow individuals who are not worthy to wear the uniform or to be in those services. Now, everything is far more open. A lot of the issues that have been uncovered over the last 18 months have been uncovered because police officers have uncovered that corruption.

I know there is a lot of talk about how police officers and police staff are not prepared to whistleblow. That has not been my experience. I do not deny that there are knots of issues right across this country in relation to poor culture, and you see poor culture in policing, in fire and in every organisation in every part of society. We all have to deal with it. I am proud that I have previously sacked police officers for some of their behaviours, and I have shouted about it from the rooftops. We need to keep doing that, because policing and fire services are not perfect, but they are made up of people who should be more representative of the community. But policing, in particular, is no different from the public, so we need to root them out. We need to make sure that we do all we can to give the public the best possible service we can, without standing for one second of it.

Q22 Paula Barker: Andy, as a former chief constable, are you confident that you will be able to see the police from the perspective of victims rather than that of the police, with victims as service users? Obviously, we have had the horrific details of Charing Cross, we have had Sarah Everard, and we have had the young child in school who was strip-searched quite recently. Public confidence in the police is at rock bottom, so how will you ensure that you are seeing things from the victims' perspective rather than the police perspective?

Andrew Cooke: That is how I have always tried to work, which is why, even when I was chief constable, it is about community first. It is not about protecting the organisation; it is about looking after communities and doing the right things for them. Policing has to be done with compassion as well, and that compassion is towards victims. We all know that the rape charge rate is horribly low. Detection rates right across the board are horribly low. We know that how good a service a victim gets across the country is a bit of a postcode lottery. I am acutely aware that policing needs to do better at looking after victims. I can assure you that it is one of the parts of business that I will be driving into as we go forward because, like everyone, I have relatives and family who have been victims as well. Some have had a really good service, and some have had a terrible service. But I have been in the fortunate position that, when they have had that terrible service, I could do something about it. A lot of people cannot.

It is about getting fairness across the board but also looking after every victim with absolute compassion and, more importantly, professionalism. We need to keep them updated on what is happening as they go through cases—not just from policing, but from the whole criminal justice system. One of our inspections recently identified that it took two years for a rape case to come to court—for a rape victim, that is horrendous. What are those individuals going through during that time? That cannot be allowed



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to continue. An awful lot more work needs to be done not just by the inspectorate and by policing, but by the whole system, to improve these issues.

- Q23 Paula Barker:** Obviously, we have been joined by Sir Tom today. He was the inspector for 10 years, so he held the position for a long time. How are you going to make the role your own? How are you going to put your stamp on it?

Andrew Cooke: I think Tom and I are very different people. We have different life experiences due to the way I have come through my career. As I said, I think Tom has done an excellent job and it has been a pleasure working with him over the last 12 months. I did not always think that of Tom when I was a chief constable—we had our fallings out. It is a measure of Tom that, despite our fallings out, I have ended up in this role and am well supported by him. I intend to take the inspectorate forward, building on Tom's good work, by being more proactive in what we do.

For me it is a bit of a failure when we place forces in "engage"—the old special measures. I am looking towards a smarter system approach to prevent police forces and fire services from getting to that stage. That involves using an awful lot of better technology and big data to identify exactly why forces start to move down. It is about being more proactive in our approach because success for me is having no police forces or fire services engaged by ourselves. At the moment it is a necessary part of what we do, and that will not change for 18 months or two years. It will take an awful lot of work to get us there. We must work more smartly with all our partners—with the APCC, the NPCC and the College of Policing. For me, being part of the inspectorate is about improving policing, not just inspecting policing. That is what I intend to do.

- Q24 Paula Barker:** On the fire element, it was interesting that you mentioned the "State of Fire and Rescue" report, and you talked about the definition and role of a firefighter. Although I am sure that Sir Tom would challenge and contest this, other Committee members and I believe that the relationship between the inspectorate and the trade unions—the FBU, for example—was quite strained at times. You spoke about wanting to have key meetings with stakeholders in the first three months. Will the FBU be one of those stakeholders, and do you believe it is important to build those relationships while maintaining independence?

Andrew Cooke: I think it is very important. I do not have a monopoly on being right, so I need to listen to every point of an argument to make my mind up. Yes, as much as I will be going to the Police Federation, the Police Superintendents Association and the National Fire Chiefs Council, I will also go to see the Fire Brigades Union to seek their perspective on how the fire service needs to move forward. Following that meeting I will make up my own mind in relation to next steps.

- Q25 Matt Vickers:** Obviously it is essential to maintain high standards in our police forces. However, do you think there are consequences for public confidence and for the morale of hard-working police officers when a



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force fails an HMIC inspection? I am from Cleveland, so I should probably declare an interest. How big a role do you think there is for HMIC in ongoing engagement to prevent forces from falling into that category—falling off the edge of a cliff?

Andrew Cooke: Public confidence must be knocked when forces go into engagement. Cleveland has been in engagement for some time, and we are working hard to get it out. A new chief constable starts very soon, and I have high hopes that he will work hard towards moving it away from where it is, but it is a long road. We have a role in maintaining confidence, but our role is also to be fearless in identifying when things are not right and need to be addressed. That was the case with Cleveland. It is always a balance between those two roles. I see the inspectorate as having a role in improving Cleveland. I worked very closely with the previous chief constable and his team, and I will work very closely with the new chief constable and his team to offer all the assistance I can. However, it is not just about the inspectorate.

There is a big role for the National Police Chiefs' Council, for the College of Policing and for the Home Office in looking for the root causes of the problems in Cleveland and addressing them together. It is the smarter system approach I mentioned before. If we work together to address those issues, it will hopefully prevent forces and services from going into engagement in the first place. It does not happen overnight; it will take time. We will see where Cleveland gets to over the next 12 or 18 months.

Q26 **Matt Vickers:** Do you think it has taken too long to resolve some of the problems in Cleveland?

Andrew Cooke: Yes. It has had too many chief constables in such a short time—I think it is eight in nine years, or something similar. That number might be a bit of an exaggeration—I am not sure of the exact number. Stability of leadership is crucial in any police force. The correct funding is crucial.

Cleveland is an interesting place. It is only a small force, and it probably has the numbers of a rural police force, but it has some really tough metropolitan problems. It has one of the highest murder rates. It has high serious violence rates. The resourcing of that force needs to be looked at as well. Does it have enough police officers to succeed at any stage? What more can the Home Office do? What more can the National Police Chiefs' Council do? And so on. There is a lot of work to be done, but that is not just by the inspectorate. It is by the whole system.

Q27 **Chair:** Mr Cooke, I have a few follow-up questions. You have spoken in quite glowing terms about your predecessor. Notwithstanding the fact he is a few feet away from you, what did Sir Tom get wrong?

Andrew Cooke: That is a very good question.

Chair: I know!

Andrew Cooke: Have you got 10 minutes while I sit here and think? Everyone is an individual. Everyone has their own approach to things. I



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am probably a bit warmer with people—with the workforce—than Tom is. That is not a criticism of him; he has surrounded himself with good people who are also warm. We all have our differences; we all have our advantages. I think Tom has not detracted at all from policing—I know the furore from policing when he was appointed. Tom has added to the inspectorate. He has improved policing in his tenure. I am really nit-picking to find things where Sir Tom went wrong, and that would be the case even if he was not a few feet behind me.

Q28 Chair: You said your role is to speak truth to power, so you are not holding back?

Andrew Cooke: Absolutely not, no. In the 12 months that I have been there, I can honestly say that I have been fully supported. I have seen improvements made to policing and fire. I have seen challenges. I might not challenge things in the same way as Tom—I might do it in a different way. I might engage stakeholders in different ways. But what he has done wrong—I am struggling to identify an issue. That is the honest “speaking truth to power” answer.

Q29 Chair: Perhaps if you get the job and we get you back in 12 months’ time we will ask the question again and see if the answer is the same.

If things go pear-shaped and you do not get this job for whatever reason and then, let’s say, you applied for the Met job and you found yourself as the new Cressida Dick, what would be your priorities?

Andrew Cooke: It is the same for policing across the country—it is legitimacy and confidence. It is getting the confidence back of communities. It is ensuring that people from all communities feel able to speak to policing. It is having a strong neighbourhood policing base right across the force. There will be 101 other things. The difficulty for me is that I am not applying for the job of Met Commissioner. It is for the Mayor and the new Commissioner to decide what they want they do. It is probably a bit presumptuous of me to start saying in this forum what I think they should do.

Q30 Chair: Okay, but do you accept that the Met probably has particular problems? It is a large force anyway and, of course, it has responsibilities beyond just the policing of the metropolis. Do you anticipate that your job, probably disproportionately, is going to be taken up with some of the problems within the Met?

Andrew Cooke: Undoubtedly, because it is the metropolis, it is the capital and it is the biggest police force in the country. But please bear in mind that it has 36,000 or 38,000 police officers, and there are 120,000-odd police officers across the country, all of whom deserve equal time from the inspectorate and others, and are equally as important as the Metropolitan police. It tends to get the most light shined upon it. We cannot deny it—we have seen the problems over the last 18 months, so there will be further work. We are currently inspecting the Metropolitan police as part of our PEEL inspections, and we will see what comes from that.

Q31 Chair: Obviously, the size is one of the issues, but all the examples you



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gave of the loss of confidence in policing are related to the Met. There are particular problems with the Met, aren't there? Do you not think that the Met needs a radically different approach to improve policing in London and, with it, the image of policing, which will have a benefit throughout the whole country?

Andrew Cooke: Policing across the country needs to be seen in a better light. The light has been shone on the Met with some atrocious issues that have happened over the last 18 months, none of which I need to repeat. It is the biggest police force, so you would expect it to have more problems, but it would be wrong of me not to say that I have felt sick to the pit of my stomach with some of the things that have come out from the Met over the last 12 to 18 months. I used to get the same feeling when I identified corruption and people preying on vulnerability when I was chief of Merseyside. Wherever it is, it hurts. It is a stain on policing. We all need to work hard to make sure that not just the Metropolitan police but police services across the country have the support they need to regain that confidence.

Q32 **Chair:** It is the largest police force, but it is also the police force that polices the most diverse part of the United Kingdom, yet, as Sir Tom pointed out, there is a woeful lack of diversity. You proffered a comment on the lack of diversity as well. Why has there not been more progress on diversity in the police and fire services, in terms of both BME and women? There is a problem with the fire service, but let us concentrate on policing. Why has progress not happened, especially in the capital, where there is the biggest potential, in terms of both the raw material potentially coming into the police force and the community the police need to empathise and identify with in order to have constructive policing? What is wrong with the Met? This will potentially occupy a lot of your time, so I am interested in your views as to why the Met seems to have such a problem?

Andrew Cooke: To reiterate, Chair, it is not just the Metropolitan police that is struggling to recruit from all our communities. It is every police force and every fire service. None is anywhere near where it should be on representation. From the last item I read, on the current trajectory it will be 2040, I think, before any force or fire service is at that level. Some are doing better than others. I know from our inspections that there is an awful lot of work going on in policing to attract people, but the numbers are not where they should be. Policing needs to continue to work hard. The policing action plan by the National Police Chiefs' Council is, I believe, being published soon—or at least its progress is being published soon. We need to look at what more it is doing.

Again, I think there is a responsibility on us all to encourage people from different backgrounds to join the police and fire service. When I think of the constant negative reporting and statements, if I were a young black man living in London or Liverpool, I would think very carefully about joining after listening to everything that is being said.



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On the flipside, I have worked with many, many very professional and successful officers from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds over my career. The reality of what it is like to be a police officer is not necessarily reflected in our communities, because of all the chatter about racist policing, racist fire services and their not being equal-opportunity employers, and so on. We all need to work harder to get better representation, not just in London but across the country.

- Q33 **Chair:** What is the role of the inspectorate in that, other than obviously publishing the data that shows the lack of diversity? Where do you have a proactive role?

Andrew Cooke: We do not just need to identify in inspections where people are failing. We need to identify the good practice, whether that is happening in this country or abroad. That is a big part of where we are taking the inspectorate, and it is a big part of our current strategy. It is about really focusing on the good work, getting people to see where it actually works and getting them to follow it. We have 43 police forces, and getting them all to do the same thing or the good thing is not necessarily easy. It is the same with the 45 or 47 fire services—I am sorry, I do not know the exact number. Good practice that would benefit different forces and services needs to be highlighted and pushed.

- Q34 **Chair:** Do you see that as something you want to do more of, perhaps with thematic studies, showing where there is good practice and how it can be done elsewhere?

Andrew Cooke: We do quite a lot of thematics in policing on various issues. A number of thematics are running at the moment relating to serious violence and various other parts of the policing side. We have not started thematics on the fire service yet, but we will this year. We will be looking at thematics in relation to the fire service, because it is now at the stage where it would benefit from them. It is about identifying what the thematics are on. We need to shine a light on the issues that are really important for, first, the public and then the services themselves.

- Q35 **Chair:** One final question from me. We recently published a study on the IOPC, following our review. What is your view on the IOPC? What is the relationship between the inspectorate and the IOPC, or what do you think it should be?

Andrew Cooke: I think it should be a professional relationship. We have different roles, but we should be working together to share good information. We should be working together, as I mentioned, on that smarter system approach to identify where policing can improve. I will give an example. We will shortly be doing a thematic on the prevention and investigation of homicide, and the IOPC has a role in that. It looks at where the police have got it wrong. There is learning there that needs to be brought into our inspections as we move forward, much as we need to include the NPCC and the College of Policing. The IOPC should be a partner in improving policing. Obviously, it must keep its independence in its dealings with police misconduct, but that does not mean we should be



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at arm's length. I have no intention of being at arm's length. I have every intention of working closely with Michael Lockwood and his team.

- Q36 **Chair:** There is one other area that we quickly need to cover. You identified that funding is a key challenge for the inspectorate, and you have put forward some suggestions on how to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Do you want to say how you think you can handle the budgets you have for now? Also, given that you have a rollover of the NCA and other non-Home Office forces, how can you effectively look after them with your current budgets?

Andrew Cooke: First, it is about ensuring that we get paid by the Home Office for what we do. We obviously need to ensure that we are being as efficient as we can in delivering the services. I will be looking at what internal changes we can make to make us as efficient as possible. There are a number of things. It is a relatively small organisation. We have a lot of small teams. It is about streamlining our approach to inspection. That will help. We take commissions for inspections, which bring money in. It is usually the same people doing the inspections, and we cannot push back all the just-as-important inspections because we are taking commissions to bring finance in. Over the last 10 years, it is fair to say that the budget has been brought in in the right place. The settlement from the Home Office this year is a fair settlement. I believe it is sufficient for us to be able to deal with what we need to deal with moving forward.

Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Cooke. If you take on this role, we very much look forward to having you back in front of our Committee. You can then spill the beans on Sir Tom and everybody else without any fear of not getting the job. Thank you very much for answering our questions today. We will now convene in private session to make our recommendations.