



**METROPOLITAN  
POLICE**

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STRATEGY, MODERNISATION AND PERFORMANCE

Janet Worth  
**Director of Strategy & Improvement**  
**DoR – Strategy & Improvement Dept**  
Rm 818,  
New Scotland Yard  
10 Broadway  
London SW1H 0BG

Telephone: 020 7230 2793  
Email: janetr.worth@met.police.uk  
www.met.police.uk

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The Committee on Standards in Public Life  
35 Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BQ

Dear Sirs,

**Response to the Issues and Questions Paper on Local Leadership and Public Trust issued by the Committee on Standards in Public Life**

The Metropolitan Police Service appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Issues and Questions paper and would be pleased to attend one of the Public Hearings if requested.

As an initial comment it is important to understand that the relationship between the MPA, the MPS and the Mayor and central government is a complex one. It is not one that comes across as transparent, open and accountable as there are no clearly documented corporate standards that govern the relationships.

The Metropolitan Police Authority is the MPS's primary scrutiny body in London, charged with holding the Commissioner to account for the services the MPS provides to the people of London. Established under The Greater London Authority Act 1999, the MPA came into effect in July 2000. The Authority gives Londoners a regime of local democratic accountability for policing that previously did not exist - its duties and responsibilities formerly rested directly with the Home Secretary. The MPA does, however, also have executive functions in that it is the statutory body with responsibility for the London Policing Plan and the resources used by the MPS, ie, finances, contracts and property belong to the Authority, and is also the employer of all MPS staff (though not police officers, who are agents of the Crown). Unlike Police Authorities outside London, however, the MPA does not have tax raising powers as the London policing precept is determined by the Mayor of London; he therefore sets the overall budget limit for the MPA.

The status of the MPA as a functional body within the GLA Group and the Mayor's role in setting the Authority's budget also means that the MPA itself, and the MPS by default, is subject to scrutiny by the London Assembly.

Therefore, whilst the MPS delivers policing services to London, it manages the finances, staff, contracts and property resources on behalf of, and within the limits set, by the MPA. The Commissioner is appointed by the Home Secretary. The Mayor of London is also the Chair of the MPA and 11 of the 23 Members of the MPA are also elected members of the London Assembly, which has a scrutiny role over the Authority. Given these complex relationships, there is inevitably a potential for confusion and misunderstanding about who has responsibility for what.

Turning to the specific questions our response is set out below. For ease of understanding we have set out the relevant question and then our response.

*The Committee would like to receive views and evidence on whether certain models of leadership or decision-making in local government (elected mayors, leader and cabinet, committee system or other models) better support or reflect the Seven Principles of Public Life.*

On a day-to-day basis, in the 32 London boroughs, police colleagues complete a significant amount of business with local government. We have experience of working with local administrations of different political colour and of differing constructs; we deal with elected and non-elected mayors, in cabinet and committee systems. The Crime and Disorder Act, and other pieces of legislation, along with common good public service delivery, has meant that we as a service have had to learn the ways and means of local authorities and other key statutory partners. The MPS is now a key ally in a position of experience, being able to lever in and share resource with local authority colleagues and increasingly joined up approaches are being found to long-term problems. The differing administrations are understood by the MPS and, for the purpose of driving partnership activity and local public service delivery, there are no obvious issues that promote or negate one system in favour of another in relation to any of the seven principles. Put simply, any structure can work - the key issue is to improve accountability and leadership by simplification of structures - whatever the model.

The customer base, certainly at a local level, has the ability to democratically show its power. This in itself assists in the principles of openness and honesty, but it can encourage some short-termist thinking, at times being more obvious in boroughs where the balance of power hangs by smaller majorities, where local politics can play a very important part in service design and delivery. Contentious, sometimes quite small decisions, on the panoply of local authority delivery, can occupy disproportionate time and debate.

*The Committee is interested in receiving views and evidence on how local authorities ensure openness and accountability when working in partnership.*

The MPS works in partnership with local authorities and other public agencies in a number of ways. These range from informal networking meetings between Borough Commanders and senior local authority officials to more formal Community Safety Partnerships that have terms of reference and hold public meetings that are usually minuted and are open to the public. These more formal arrangements are probably good examples of meeting the seven principles of public life as there are usually good corporate governance arrangements in place and they promote holistic cross partner working. Similarly the police and local authorities enter into Local Area Agreements (LAA) and Comprehensive Area Agreements (CAA). These can also be said to directly support the seven principles e.g. taking account of local priority and need; creating a performance framework supported by public reporting which should encourage openness and accountability etc. On the other hand LAAs could be

seen to water-down the accountability of individuals because targets are shared. This is also the case in the proposed Home Office target of satisfaction with both the police and Council. Any joint deliverables potentially detract from individual accountability.

*The Committee is interested in receiving views and evidence on openness and transparency within the Greater London Authority.*

The only mention in the whole document about the MPS is in para 3.7 where it cites the MPA as being responsible for overseeing the MPS. Yet the MPS is responsible for the operational delivery of policing services in London and manages significant resources (£3.6bn spend, 52,000 officers and staff) in delivering that service. The complexity of the relationships between the MPS and the GLA Group is set out in our general comments. The Mayor has a number of specific priorities that feature tackling crime and/or the fear of crime yet there is no direct relationship between the MPS and the Mayor, except through his role as Chair of the MPA, and the London Assembly. In addition, the Mayor's powers in respect of community safety are wider than his powers as Chair of the MPA. This can lead to uncertainty about roles, responsibilities and powers for all the various agencies involved in decision-making and implementation.

*The Committee is interested in receiving views and evidence on the effectiveness of the current arrangements for holding the London Mayor and the Assembly to account.*

As mentioned earlier, there are a number of MPA Members who are elected members of the London Assembly and, in one case, also the Mayor's executive lead for policing. From an external perspective, this can lead to confusion as to who is responsible for executive action and for scrutiny when some Members are wearing two or three hats, covering both executive and scrutiny functions.

*The Committee is interested in receiving views and evidence on how effectively the functional bodies are currently held to account on behalf of Londoners.*

Please see general comments and response to previous question.

*The Committee is keen to examine the relationships between the Mayor and the Government Office for London – in terms of accountability and openness.*

From the Service perspective, there is a need for clarity on the respective role and responsibilities and the development of integrated working where appropriate. The issue is, however, wider than the relationship between the Mayor and the GoL. Each functional body is an independent legal entity, therefore the relationship between both the MPA and MPS and GoL needs to be examined. For instance, the MPA is currently responsible, by statute, for setting the MPS's targets yet the MPS also has to negotiate with individual London Councils and GoL in respect of LAA targets.

Yours faithfully,

Janet Worth  
**Director – Strategy & Improvement Dept**