

Notes on meeting with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe – 1st March in Kingston

This was a very interesting evening and Sir Bernard very impressive.

He told us that London has 8.6m people in 32 boroughs all with a very diverse population. and the other crimes are lesser offences of which there are many more. Last year, the total offences in the Metropolitan district increased 4.4%, and Richmond increased 0.4% (which is actually an increase of 47 incidents.)

He talked about the £600m reduction in budget and how the police have met this shortfall. Selling real estate, reducing back staff by 3,500, reducing the number of managers. However, there is still a shortfall and they are looking at ways to fix this. There doesn't seem to be any danger of the Safer Neighbourhood teams being reduced.

In response to questions:

1. What is planned for the amalgamation of Safer Neighbourhood Boards?

It seems this is not envisioned in the near future but less layers of management have to be introduced

2. When will information on scams be made public just as the various crime figures are public:

This will start in April.

The Commissioner mentioned Les Jackson and the great work he is doing on scams!

3. The use of body cameras for police officers

He said these are good and work. The force is buying 22,000 body cameras and so all front line officers will have one soon. They will not always be on but can be turned on and will record back 30 seconds before they were turned on.

4. Could money be saved reducing the amount of time it takes for a police officer to 'book' a criminal

The Commissioner explained that this is a lengthy process which involves many steps which take time. While it would be good –it's not always possible to reduce the time spent, especially if they are to do a thorough job in presenting a case.

5. The Rugby World Cup in Richmond

Borough Commissioner Kennedy said that the policing had been excellent and that only 55 pick pocket/theft from person crimes were recorded. This compares with 5 pick pocket last Saturday. Surprisingly Anti Social Behaviour fell during this time compared with the corresponding period last year.

6. What do you think of the Mayor?!

The Commissioner was very complimentary about Mr. Johnson saying what he will be saying in a documentary coming out next week. He is loyal, intelligent, funny, supporting and demanding (in a nice way!) He has always stood by the police.

7. What would you like most from the next mayor?

More resources, and thus more money - always!

8. Ringmaster was replaced by Safer Neighbourhood Teams why was information flow stopped

Ringmaster was a way of keeping info circulating and apparently 'someone' said it was not necessary with introduction of 101. The Commissioner said there was no need for it to be stopped for that reason, and he would look into this. (I looked into this for the Commissioner - Ringmaster is expensive at £20,000 with additional running costs and has been somewhat superseded by social media- email, twitter and facebook which we are trialling - issue was more that 101 was not suitable for passing information - Hannah)

9. PCSO's

There were 5,000 on the force, now 1,670 of which 1,000 work for Transport for London. The 670 are therefore divided between 32 Boroughs. The Commissioner would like to ask the new mayor for more PCSO's!

10. Murders in the Met

The Commissioner is proud that 95% of murders in the Met are solved using CCTV and good investigation. (There are approximately 100 murders in the Metropolitan district per annum). He admitted there was room for improvement in other systems, especially detection of cyber crime. He explained the simplicity of catching criminals; Either they are caught red handed Or Forensics prove the crime or someone tells you

11. Sale of Met real estate

This has helped improve efficiency as there was a lot of unused space before. The £1 billion which has been raised will be invested in upgrading technology. The sale has saved £70m per year in up-keep of the old buildings. He did mention that while they strive to have police stations open 24 hours a day, the public actually want the police to go to them...

12. Was the recent shooting in the borough of Kingston an indication violence is escalating

It was pointed out that the venue was the only link to the borough. All people involved were from outside the borough, so no!

13. Mental health issues

The Met arrests 250,000 people per year – of those only 5 died in custody. 40% of those 250,000 might have mental health issues. He said it is hard to assess when a crime has been committed the state of mental health of the perpetrator – so this is an on-going problem and perhaps more needs to be invested in training?

14. How can the met reach out to young people 16-30?

It was pointed out that there were very few young people at the meeting (besides the cadets). The Commissioner said the young aren't all at the stage of life where these issues are important to them, but that the Met tries to go into every school and educate the young and forge good relationships (through the Safer Neighbourhood teams). He would like to see a dedicated police officer in every school so their positive relationship with the police starts young.

15. Regarding the case of sexual allegations and naming people in the press

The commissioner emphasised that the police don't name names till the person is charged – but once the name does get out into the public domain, people don't forget which can be very unfortunate....

16. The investigatory Powers Bill (otherwise known as the snoopers charter)

The commissioner emphasised that the police need information after a crime has been committed. In the case of missing children, their phone history gives the best detail. As for other serious crime – drugs, terrorist – it is a form of evidence gathering and good for the Public. He emphasised that any system to be monitored has to be authorized through the right channels – but the information can be vital. This issue will be debated in Parliament.

A very informative evening!

Bunny

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