



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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I write following your decision last week to proceed with proposals that will replace the Met's current 32 borough policing model with 12 Basic Command Units (BCUs). It will come as no surprise to you that this announcement has been a source of great concern in Bromley, as it has across the capital.

Whilst I fully appreciate that pressures on the Met's budget require efficiencies to be found—something many of us, from all political colours, have raised with the Government – and understand that there is, arguably, a logic in merging a number of boroughs together, the method by which we have got to the proposed configurations appears unsound.

It is completely illogical to pair Bromley, London's largest borough by size, with Croydon and Sutton. Together, these three boroughs will cover a significant span of south London. It is therefore difficult to see how adequate police provision will be tenable over such a wide area, or indeed how meaningful community relations and tailored neighbourhood policing can be fostered when officers will be travelling from one side of the capital to the other.

The pathfinders that have preceded this decision in the Central North and East BCUs have identified considerable problems in maintaining satisfactory response times. Although I acknowledge that changes implemented during the course of the trials have brought about some improvements, I believe our excellent local police force will face an insurmountable challenge in replicating this on what will be a much larger scale. This not only raises serious questions about public safety, but also the safety of officers responding to calls if isolated from support so far away.

Bromley is, on the whole, a leafy, suburban borough with very different needs and challenges to Croydon. My fear, which is shared by many, is that this reorganisation will simply result in much needed resources being diverted from outer London boroughs to those, like Croydon, with more inner city attributes, including higher crime. From both a geographic and demographic perspective, it would surely be more prudent to merge Bromley with either Bexley or Lewisham.

I must also question the premise upon which this decision has been made. The funding gap in the Met's budget you have alluded to was identified by the previous Mayor of London, Boris



Johnson, and is something the Met, working with its stakeholders, has been planning for since 2015.

Your predecessor managed to reduce crime with the same budget and roughly the same number of officers. Indeed, under your tenure knife crime has risen, year-on-year, by 24 per cent, and gun crime 34 per cent. There are considerably more officers in London per person than there are in the rest of the country, and it receives over one and a half times the average funding per head of the population. Moreover, as was announced in the recent Police Funding Settlement, investment in our capital will rise by £42.9 million in 2018/19. You have the ability to move funds around within the Greater London Authority budget, and it is ultimately your responsibility to set the Met's policing priorities. It is disingenuous then to suggest that this was a decision forced upon you.

It would seem that now would be an appropriate time to review again the recommendations published last October in the London Assembly Budget and Performance Committee's report - *Who's paying the Bill?*. As you know, that includes procuring an independent review of the Met's National and International City (NICC) grant bid; getting the MPS' digital savings back on track; and reassessing your arbitrary target of spending 85 per cent of the budget on frontline policing, which the cross-party Committee found infringed on savings and resulted in non-operational work being forced on to operational people, damaging efficiency.

I would be grateful if you could explain the rationale that has led to these particular groupings being proposed, and would welcome an opportunity to discuss this issue with you further over the coming weeks. I have taken the liberty of copying in your Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden.

Bob Neill MP