Witness: Ed Stearns

Statement No: 1

Exhibits Referred to: ES/1, ES/2, ES/3, ES/4, ES/5

Date Statement Made: 30 March 2012

The Leveson Inquiry into the Culture Practices and Ethics of the Press

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This is the exhibit marked 'ES/2' referred to in the statement of Ed Stearns, dated this 30th day of March 2012.

Social Media Communication Strategy

SUMMARY

The Commissioner wants to increase our opportunities to speak directly to and engage with Londoners. Digital, particularly social media channels are one of the most impactive ways if doing this.

The MPS already has a broad portfolio of social media channels; Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and You Tube. However, if we are to play an active role in social media a shift needs to be made from telling the public of London about policing, to actively engaging in discussion with them. While there are risks associated with opening up new communication channels there is also a gap opening up wherein the MPS is missing opportunities.

This Social Media Communication Strategy sets out how we will use social media to support the MPS Communication Strategy and deliver increased direct communication and engagement with Londoners.

Aim

1. The strategy will support and amplify the MPS corporate communication strategy, it will keep Londoners informed about policing the Capital and local policing by integrating social media channels with mainstream communication. It will ;

   - Position the MPS as an open, transparent organisation
   - Facilitate direct two-way communication and engagement between Londoners and the Met, particularly at a local level;
   - Recognise that increasing numbers of Londoners obtain information via social media and we are responding to that change making our organisation as accessible as practicable.
   - Articulate how different digital and social media channels will contribute to the overall strategy

   This strategy does not cover information assurance and governance, systems selection, introduction and security. These issues and any associated costs, particularly in regard to policy and legislation are being looked at in parallel by DOI and will be covered by separate papers.

Audience

2. Not everyone in London is online. This strategy is not therefore a panacea, rather it recognises that a large number of people now consume media and obtain

information in a different way and is aimed at them. It sits below the MPS Communication Strategy.

3.   London has the highest level of e-intensity in the UK. Over 80% of households have access to the internet. 89% of Londoners over the age of 13 have mobile phones. Nearly 90% of Londoners have the ability to access the internet via their mobile phones.

Organisational Priorities and Values

4.   Our social media presence needs to support the corporate objectives and reflect and where possible, demonstrate the corporate values.

5.   The MPS vision is, simply, to 'Be The Best Police Service', we will achieve this through Total Policing. Communication will play a key role in helping Londoners to see and experience the vision.

6.   Total Policing directs all our resources towards three key objectives:

- Total War on Crime
- Total Care for Victims
- Total Professionalism

Values
- Humility
- Integrity
- Transparency

7.   The Corporate Communication Strategy also articulates our intention to speak directly with Londoners and this will be especially important at a local level. While a corporate presence will be crucial in delivering the Communication Strategy, local messages will have more impact within local communities. Therefore the priority for rolling out local social media channels should be within boroughs. Although it is accepted that certain 'corporate assets' such as the MPS helicopter which can be seen to provide a solution to a business problem, may also take priority.

Risk

8.   There is a lot of concern about the risk in empowering the organisation to start using social media channels. The fear is that we will lose control of our communication and that this will negatively impact on our reputation. It is possible to be quite flexible in our approach to monitoring, for example when a channel is first set up and the user is inexperienced, tighter monitoring may be required than when they are up and running and more experienced.

9.   We should also remember that our staff are out and about meeting and talking to Londoners as part of their job and we do not monitor or control how they do this, we trust them to do so sensibly. This trust should be extended to the use of social media.

10. This strategy therefore, sets out a framework in which we would expect users to operate to ensure we maximise the opportunities and minimise the risks.

11. There is detailed guidance available on the DPA intranet site for setting up corporate social media/ digital communication channels.

12. We have also drawn up a RAG system which will dictate the level of corporate involvement in a piece of communication. We will also look to provide dynamic real time guidance in the event of emerging issues or developments in technology.

13. Although not specifically covered in the paper, FOI has been identified as a risk and is covered in the social media training programme which has been put together by DPA.

14. Personal use of social media channels by police officers has also been identified as a risk, although it should be noted that in the recent HMIC inspection into integrity of the nearly 2000 social media police officer accounts investigated during the inspection, only 2% of those were found to be engaging in inappropriate behaviour.

15. Therefore, while accepting the risk, we should also recognise the potential opportunity. We have 50,000 staff working for us, rather as we do with our internal communication channels, if we provide them with correct information on issues, they will be to communicate from an informed position.

RAG System

Green – go ahead without contacting Borough Communicator /DPA
- Local Good News, Burglary, Assault, Car Crime, Criminal Damage, Anti-Social Behaviour, Non KSI RTCs, Crime Prevention, Street and Community Meetings, Road traffic collision – if simply a road closure following police incident, Retweeting (RT) @CO11metpolice or @metpoliceuk tweets or local council/community groups tweets, Links to content on MPS website

Amber – tweet, but inform Borough Communicator /DPA
The following ONLY if they ARE already in the public domain - Met wide operations, Court results, Local joint initiatives, KSI RTCs, ASBOs, Evacuation/Other Emergency, Speeding/Crackdown, Wanted suspects, Missing people, Charge details.

Red – always call Borough Communicator/DPA first!
Any of the mentioned amber fields if NOT in the public domain. Plus- SCD/SO/CO Investigations, Budgetary/Financial, Political/Government, Staff/Officer disciplinary, Force Policy, Force Reputation, Major/Critical Incident, Escaped Prisoners
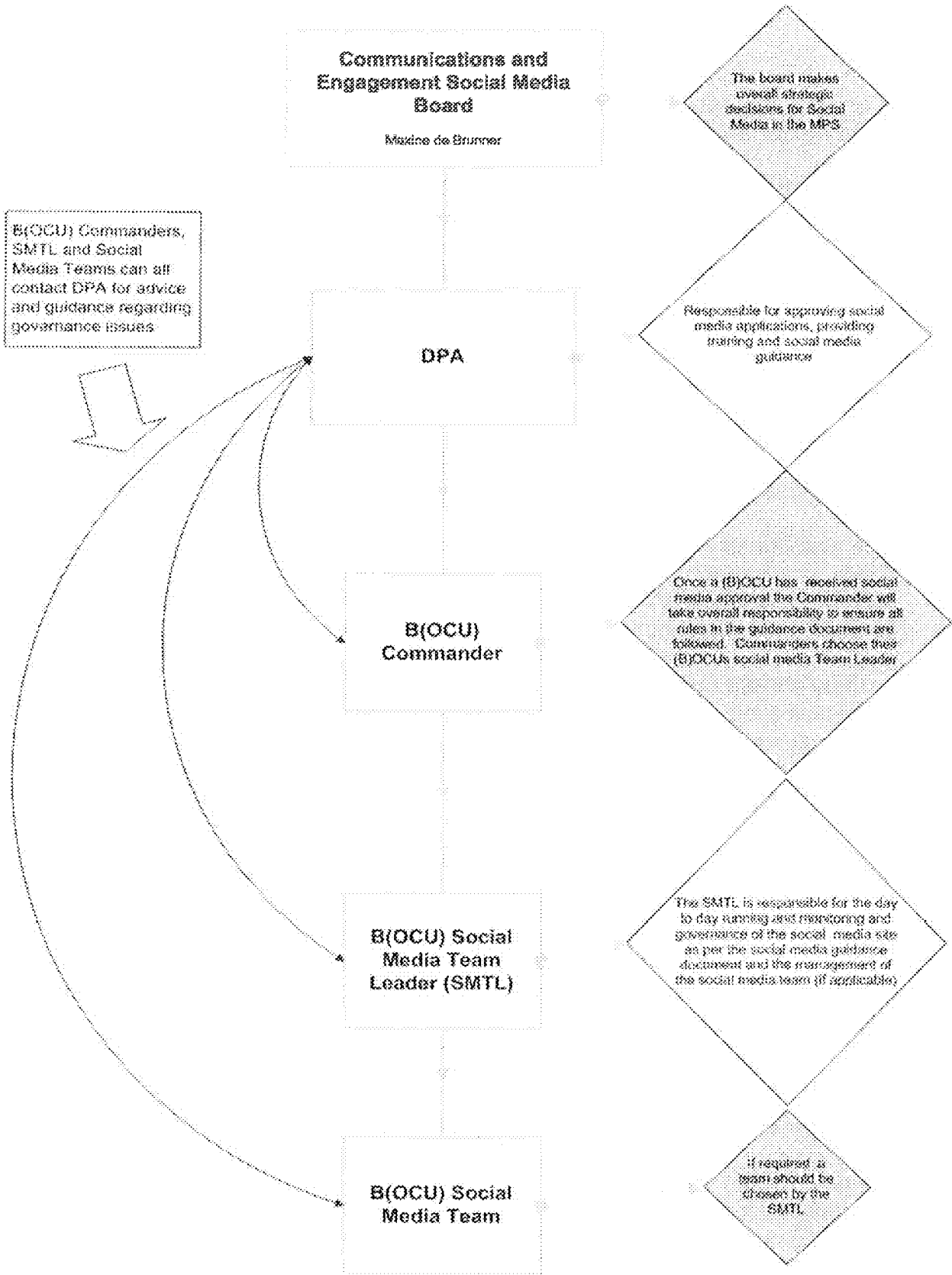

Monitoring/moderation

16.   Software will provide solutions to some concerns about monitoring and moderation. DOI will advise on this. However, we also need to be clear about the purpose of monitoring. If we are concerned about having less control over our communication, monitoring is not the solution. Monitoring should enable us to identify issues which raise reputational issues and may thus need to be addressed. The traffic lights referred to above will assist here.

17.   It should be noted that further work is being done within SCD in this area and that DPA are likely to piggy back on whatever systems SCD select.

Governance

18.   A framework for governance has been developed. This sets out who is ultimately responsible for the the messages and content on social media channels and how they can best be administered.

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Communications and Engagement Social Media Board

Maxine de Brunner

The board makes overall strategic decisions for Social Media in the MPS

B(OCU) Commanders, SMTL and Social Media Teams can all contact DPA for advice and guidance regarding governance issues

DPA

Responsible for approving social media applications, providing training and social media guidance

B(OCU) Commander

Once a (B)OCU has received social media approval the Commander will take overall responsibility to ensure all rules in the guidance document are followed. Commanders choose their (B)OCUs social media Team Leader

B(OCU) Social Media Team Leader (SMTL)

The SMTL is responsible for the day to day running and monitoring and governance of the social media site as per the social media guidance document and the management of the social media team (if applicable)

B(OCU) Social Media Team

If required a team should be chosen by the SMTL

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Principles

19.   In general, the following principles should be the overall guiding force behind any social media interaction.

- **Activity should link directly to the MPS Communication Strategy**

20.   Any social media activity should be integrated and should link directly back to the Communication Strategy. That way we can be sure that it contributes to our corporate priorites and reflects and demonstrates our values.

- **Activity should demonstrate our values and our brand**

21.   By ensuring that activity is linked to the corporate communication strategy we can try to bring to life the values of our brand thus increasing our reputation.

22.   The more local the activity the more it can embody our values and over time, will develop credibility and become a credible corporate voice that is trusted, even in times of crisis. Local information is also more likely to increase confidence.

- **One size fits all may not be the best approach**

23.   It may be tempting to try and set up a uniform approach to social media across all parts of the organisation. This may not be helpful as to make it more effective those involved need to be committed to and capable of meaningful engagement.

- **Activity should facilitate two- way communication**

24.   Many police forces use social media purely as another broadcast channel, with little real engagement. This is a missed opportunity and ignores the real power of these channels. It is accepted that this will be more applicable to local channels rather than corporate channels.

- **Successful digital/ social media communication is not about control**

25.   Organisations that try to control social media users by censoring opinion or adopting a dictatorial tone fall foul of the medium and end up antagonising users rather than engaging them. Quite often online communities will self moderate resulting in a much more powerful conversation/ debate. There are also tools that can be used to help with moderation.

- **Reputational risk can be managed without being heavy handed**

26.   We should accept that mistakes will be made and that mistakes made in good faith can be put right with an apology. If guidance is not followed we may want to reconsider whether the channel is being used appropriately.

- **Content should be shareable**

27.   The real power of these channels is that people share content with friends thus amplifying our messages. But they will only share something if it is necessary information or engaging. Information which is high demand (unique, official) during a period of intense interest is always the most shared

28. Images, films and interactive applications are more likely to be shared but good crime prevention advice could be equally helpful.

29. We also need to ensure that our own channels are easy to share with buttons on stories etc.

Action plan

30. Given the statistics for social media usage we should no longer expect people to go to our website for information – rather we should provide that content in the most used places, or link to our website from those channels.

31. Communication may sometimes be more appropriate via another users channel– for example after a youth murder, tribute sites are frequently set up on facebook. In this situation it would be more appropriate to put appeals for information on that site – with the victims' families agreement, as those with information are more likely to go to that page than an MPS one.

32. Also local policing issues are quite often debated on local forums, where this happens it would be more appropriate for the Met to join the debate on those forums.

33. The ability to provide real time operational updates will bring to life the war on crime and these opportunities should be maximised.

Data
34. We should constantly look at how our channels are being engaged with and responded to. If users did not engage with a piece of content, can we tell why that was and how should our future plans be adapted.

35. Has there been a change in where people are more likely to interact with us, i.e. do people prefer to engage with us via Facebook or is Twitter still more popular? What are we going to do as a result of this?

Crisis communication
36. We need to have contingency plans in place for how we deal with a crisis as things can become out of control quickly within social media channels.

37. As a minimum we should agree that in the event of a major incident all communication should be through the corporate channels with local channels sharing corporate content with their audiences.

Channels

38. The main channels we will use are: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. As far as possible each channel needs to have a relationship with the others, to be integrated and link across from one to the other.

39. We already have presence on Facebook – 45,000 followers on our 'Who Killed Deon' page. We now need to build on this relationship.

40. We should: Hold polls to find out what this audience would like more information on and then provoke discussion. This audience were really engaged with the issue of Joint Enterprise – what else are they interested in – Stop and Search? Demonstrations? Let the audience guide us but also provide officers to engage with the audience. We should also explore end user experience events or 'non conferences' to ensure that the community we are reaching out to has the experience they want to have when engaging with us through these channels.

Corporate Facebook Page
41. We have set up a Corporate Facebook page to support and publicise the Commissioners Roadshows and Corporate campaigns. We will be able to up load clips, host virtual online roadshow, hosts webchats with the Commissioner and publicise future events. It will also have an RSS and Twitter feed.

42. In time the site will grow organically – when we have campaign assets we will put them onto the Facebook page and try to stimulate debate on the issue – for example our Domestic Violence campaign has an online film which we could drive traffic to as part of the overall campaign.

43. In time we would also link the Corporate page with the youth page and local pages so the corporate page becomes a hub.

44. However, we will need to recognise that we may not be overwhelmed by people wanting to follow us or 'like' us.

MPS Website
45. The MPS Website needs to be mobile accessible – at least the most relevant sections i.e. contact, crime prevention, Safer Neighbourhoods. At the moment it is not possible for visitors to 'share this story/information' function. This should be made available for news stories/crime prevention advice etc. This is being explored by DOI.

Safe Website
46. This site also needs to be mobile accessible. We will also explore offering an 'Ask the Commissioner' function and a Commissioners video message for young people

47. We recently carried out some evaluation where we asked visitors to tell us if there was anything they felt the site should cover/ offer. There were several suggestions to help us develop the site over time.

Twitter
48. Twitter is the channel which will benefit most building profiles following the guidance.

49. The organisation needs to decide which areas of our business would most be able to bring to life our values or support our priorities and which areas are critical to this.

50. It will be crucial however, to ensure that we have the right people engaged in this activity. It can be resource intensive and those doing it need to be signed up to our aims and objectives. For example, we might decide in the short term to find an individual who can support a particular priority or demonstrate a key value. The key to this would be that the users should tweet all the time, not just during a critical event so that over time they build credibility and trust with their followers. They should also be familiar with and supportive of the channel, for example:

- Transparency – Public Order is an area of increasing public scrutiny. If we were to have a public order officer, tweeting on the ground this would demonstrate transparency. We have already started to trial this approach with @MPSonthestreets.

- Best Police Service: Select a user in an area where we are respected as world leaders. For example: murder or counter terrorism, Mounted Branch, ASU.

- Cutting crime: Live time tweeting from Operations such as Hawk – including video and photographs as well as live streaming from the operations room.

- Safer Neighbourhood officer: Real time updates of where they are and what they are doing on a ward – real time crime prevention advice (e.g. I am walking down a street where there are no house lights on – reminder to get timers on lights or leave a light on.)

- Total victim care: FLO/ Rape Chaperones/ Child Protection Team

- Integrity: DPS Officer/response officer

- Humility – A borough commander talking about the commitment of his team

Corporate v OCU level engagement
51. A lot of the strength and power of our twitter engagement will be at a very local level and so long as the guidance, governance and traffic light approach is followed this should be encouraged.

52. However, those participating will need the support of their OCU commander and the intent and resource to be able to engage in a meaningful way. It will be dependent on individuals. As the number of accounts grow we will need to establish what we call individual accounts and make sure they are about the organisation and not the individual.

Evaluation

53. We will analyse data from individual channels but use data to determine the level of engagement. Numbers will only give us part of the story. It has been suggested that a measure could be the number of times our Twitter channels are trending. However, if we are trending because people think we have handled something

badly, this is not success. We would therefore need to look at the percentage of positive and negative comments.

54. Looking at how much our content is being shared will help us to determine the level of engagement too.

55. We would also look at who is engaging with us and where they are doing it – i.e. which platforms are the most popular.

56. We should also analyse the number of times we have had to issue apologies as this will impact on our professionalism.

57. Our evaluation should also be about sharing good practice, see what is working where and see if it can be replicated.

58. We also need to consider how we will measure cost effectiveness.

59. Above all whatever we find out through our evaluation needs to be incorporated into future plans

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