

Witness: Sir Paul Stephenson

Statement No: 1

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

Date Statement Made: 20 February 2012

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

This is the exhibit marked 'SPS/1' referred to in the statement of Sir Paul Stephenson, dated this 20th day of February 2012.

Police Superintendents Association 15/09/2009

Commissioner Sir Paul Stephenson

'A new decade of policing'

Good morning and thank you Mr President for inviting me to join you today. I welcome the opportunity to speak at this important conference.

It is not often, these days, that an adopted Londoner like me is invited as far north as this - although perhaps next year you could do me a favour and move it further up to the wonderful county of Lancashire!

We are approaching the end of a decade of significant change and challenges in policing. It is unlikely that the next will be any less testing of us.

There is no doubt that the police service is a different organisation to that which it was in 2000. It looks different and is different, but we can never stand still and in a rapidly changing world the next decade is likely to bring yet more unprecedented change to the service.

You are aware of some of what lies ahead - many of you lead BCUs or specialist crime teams. You are working within financial pressures, facing increasing expectations and delivering a 24/7 service. It has never been easy to be a police leader; but never more challenging or exciting. I also acknowledge that, at times, it can be a stressful and pressurised job.

As we look ahead to the next decade of policing, I remember what I was asked to do when I joined the service:

Save life, prevent crime and detect crime - it is these that underpin Safety and Confidence.

You will not hear me calling for a Royal Commission on policing ... because 34 years ago I was told the purpose of policing ... and it hasn't changed - we remain in the security, safety business - we create the conditions for security to allow the people who pay our wages to enjoy their lives.

Achieving that security and safety begins with what I call our 'presence'. Over the past ten years, we have heard the message from our communities that there is no substitute for 'feet on the ground' - it is fundamental to keeping the streets safe and secure - we are the ones that need to provide the uniformed governance of the streets.

We have re-engaged with the public at the local level and we are moving on from delivering visibility and being the 'eyes and ears' on the ground to making our presence felt and our engagement noticed and communicated.

We have a duty to be interested in our local places - to own the issues and problems and to resolve them. We should seek to ensure that neighbourhood police teams are familiar, recognisable and an integral part of the local scene.

Confidence and trust in us is earned and will improve when we can be relied upon on every occasion to fulfil our promises, tackle the issues that affect people and do our duty to deliver visible justice.

But can we say that all our practices are supporting visible justice? I am personally aware of a recent case of a thug who, following a brief dispute with a smaller lad, hit him from behind, without provocation, shifting his teeth. The shock felt by the victim and a number of people present was palpable. What was the outcome? He received a police caution. I cannot imagine that anyone would see this as visible justice.

I am reminded that nationally, only 38.3% of our citizens have confidence in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. The figure is just over 45% in London; better but not good enough. I believe that violent thugs should stand in front of a Magistrate even when the injury caused by their thuggery is thankfully less than it might have been. We know that criminal justice is often too slow, too bureaucratic and too complicated at the summary justice level but have we got the balance right in diverting offenders from the court process.

In London we are piloting a number of efficiency initiatives to streamline and speed up summary justice and to put the courts firmly in the forefront of dealing with violent thugs who should stand before them.

I believe that the vast majority of the public want to be on our side. The issue is that they want to be confident that we are on their side, addressing the issues that are important to them in a way that makes sense to them.

I am proud of the work the Met is doing on identifying the key drivers for confidence - it's about how we treat people, our level of engagement, our effectiveness at delivery and our ability to tackle anti social behaviour. We need to ensure that the communities we serve believe that they will get a fair and professional service from us and ensure that our services are accessible.

Our presence can be enhanced through good use of communication. It makes sense to use all means possible to engage people - including new modern technologies - if we can reach thousands of people through YouTube or social networking methods, we should adopt these technologies. High quality websites and message systems will significantly improve our presence.

Our partnership arrangements should improve our presence too and the linking up with strategic partners is very important. We need joint information sharing, joint analysis and joint tasking to be effective locally - right across the crime and disorder spectrum of partners.

But we expect our partners to play their part in preventing crime and disorder. In particular, we need the effort to divert young people at risk or on the fringes of criminality to be more consistent and substantial. You will recall the media headlines about serious youth crime in London including increasing numbers of youth

murders - kids killing kids. We had a duty to act, including increasing stop and search intrusive operations. However, I want to see the same intense focus by other agencies on preventing young people from becoming the victims or perpetrators of crime as we, the police, bring to suppressing it. Whilst we will never refrain from protecting the public through intrusive enforcement tactics, these should be a last not a first resort. We have a vital role, others need to deliver theirs. We are not social engineers.

Maintaining our presence is more than just patrolling and it should not be random but targeted and planned. Our posture, behaviour and approachability significantly impact on public perception. Single patrolling, for example, should be our de-fault position and a pre-requisite to increasing our presence. In London, we have come to realise that patrolling in pairs is seen to the casual observer as waste... a practice that had largely become the norm in London. We have changed that and as a result of this and other initiatives, we are confident that we will deploy an additional half a million hours of patrol in town centres over the next twelve months. It's a start.

Staying on this theme of presence - our presence is conditional - we have a deal with the public that needs to be honoured. For example, in London the potentially controversial tactic of stop and search must draw upon community support. It is a vital tool in the fight against crime and terror and we will continue to develop the work that has been done around knife crime in building consensus with local communities about the extent and nature of stop search activity.

With regard to public order, our presence has to ensure that we balance the right to protest with our duty to prevent disorder and keep people and property safe. We are grappling with this, in particular, the tactic of containment - and the circumstances when it is and is not appropriate to use it. We will seek to use alternatives but there may be times when this particular tactic is necessary.

Let me be clear on this issue though. We have embraced scrutiny of our tactics, evaluated and moved forward; that is why I commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to undertake the review of our public order tactics. And to this end, the Met will host an international conference on public order on 3rd December and I would like to take this opportunity to invite all forces to attend.

Our presence should also intrude into the activities of organised crime groups through the use of informants and surveillance and by our levels of sophistication in tackling e-crime. It is important that the public have confidence in our ability to take on organised criminals and win justice - and here I do have to confess some disappointment that collectively we, the police service, APA and government haven't made more progress in addressing the challenges of organised crime from a policing perspective since I made recommendations on this matter back in 2003. Whilst I would acknowledge the substantial efforts in the interim, particularly by relevant ACPO leads and HMIC, this needs to be matched with outcomes. However, I am heartened by what I believe to be renewed determination to confront this issue.

My final point about our presence is that it is global and, over the next ten years, will continue to need to be so - and I'd like to pay tribute to the significant number of officers from forces across the country who work in difficult and sometimes hostile environments in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. We appreciate the importance of their role. Recently I was proud to meet Nick Noakes, one of my constables who is about to

receive the Military Cross for bravery in Afghanistan working for the Territorial Army; breathtaking bravery and achievement. We should never fail to remember the sheer breadth of contribution towards a safer world by many of our officers and staff.

I've talked about presence and I want to move on now to discuss another substantial challenge we face over the next ten years - the need to create a 'fit for purpose' performance framework that we can all believe in.

We are paid to perform - to deliver safety and confidence. I continue to believe that a performance culture is crucial to our success. However, I also acknowledge that over the years measurement of police performance has become burdensome, but we must be careful not to abandon the benefits of a performance culture just because it is unfashionable.

I recognise the potential for unintended consequences of this culture - the skewing of priorities and the lack of discretion and simple common sense, but we must ensure that any future performance framework, any rounded assessment, does not generate new unwanted side effects.

A mature performance framework should be about creating an aspirational policing culture - an intolerance of crime and its effects, in particular violence in all its forms, zeal to catch criminals and an improvement in confidence.

Seeking to improve confidence is a good target and it is the right aspiration. Research has shown that people who have high levels of confidence in the police are more likely to report crime, come forward with information, cooperate with the police and obey the law.

Confidence is a key measure of a well performing police service but it is worth remembering that the criminals in our communities will probably not give us a vote of confidence! We will not be popular with everyone - nor frankly do I want to be. That doesn't keep me awake at night.

This leads me to the issue of accountability for our performance.

This is, justifiably, an important debate. And one that, for the imperative task of retaining all that is best in UK policing, must be settled once and for all.

But it is a debate that should only start from one over-riding principle, one that is set in stone by all sides - that the police service remains operationally independent.

Let me be very clear with you where I stand on this issue. Elected politicians are an essential, invaluable part of the police world that have to be heard. And they have a huge part to play in maintaining that operational independence that is our lifeblood.

But ...

There must be appropriate space between policing and politics.

We are less than a year from a General Election. Rightly, politicians from every party, of every hue, will be hotly debating policing issues. Terrorism, drugs, knife crime, youth crime, guns, gangs... I welcome that, indeed I believe it is vital. I know, as I believe you do, that policing is far too important to be left solely to us.

It has to be right that it is the community - whether through elected politicians or individual citizens - who tell us WHAT it believes its police service should be concentrating on, targeting, working towards.

But it also has to be right that it is us, the Police Service, which retains at all times that essential operational independence to decide how to bring about and carry out those general and justifiable aspirations.

I've been brought up in my policing career on the inviolate principle of police operational independence. Sadly, in the past there have been a number of attempts to tinker with the phrase - I see no need.

That principle has underpinned my career. It will continue to underpin my Commissionership. It cannot be otherwise.

I stress that politics and policing will always co-exist. Any sensible analysis confirms this.

It is the right and duty of politicians to establish the over-arching framework for policing - to sit with us and inform our priorities, to help ensure we have the logistics and resources to deliver them, then to hold us to account on our delivery.

For instance, in London, I and my senior officers regularly sit down with the Mayor Boris Johnson and senior members of the MPA to discuss policing policy and related issues.

Shortly after the election he wanted to put more officers on buses, to protect passengers and make them feel more secure. We explained it would require extra resources - he gave us extra cash to fund it, and we carried it out. And it has worked; crime on buses has been cut by 18% since the start of this jointly funded operation.

We talked too about the problem of knife crime and youth gangs and we agreed that it was a major problem that had to be targeted. There were nearly 30 youth homicides in the capital last year, many involving knives; it was a natural meeting of concerns.

But Mayor Johnson, and his people at City Hall, would be the first to accept that whilst wider views and opinions are helpful and to be encouraged, the decision of how to actually do it, who to target, where, when to act, what officers to use and how many were decisions for me and my officers, and ours alone.

That is operational independence, and it must not be compromised. It is our responsibility to set up that operational strategy and to operationally lead our forces and teams and deliver. In fact it is more than our responsibility - it is our duty. And by the way, I have no reason to believe that Boris Johnson has a contrary view to this and I am sure that the Home Secretary, Alan Johnson, would agree too. In fact, no sensible politician would think otherwise.

But if we are to protect this duty, this role of operational independence, we must be surefooted and wise when engaged in debate on significant public policy issues. Whilst we must always have a professional view, a role in presenting facts and issues, as we see them and offering advice where appropriate, we must avoid any clumsiness that could create the perception, or indeed any opportunity for the mischievous to suggest we are anything other than politically impartial.

Our duty is to inform the debate, to act as professional advisors, while staying well clear of the minefield of political opinion or position. For instance, if you ask me as a police officer whether we should retain DNA, should anyone be surprised when I highlight its value as an investigative tool. That's my job. But it is not for me to decide where the balance between retention and civil liberty lies; that is a matter for Parliament.

Just as the politician has no role in operational policing, and please note, I stress 'operational', so the police have no role in politics. The police service is not part of nor the arm of any administration, of any government. We are a servant for the whole community.

So whilst we must remind those who wish to challenge police operational independence of its value within our system, we have a duty to do nothing to undermine the trust in us for its professional discharge.

The public will forgive us many things, but they will not forgive an incursion into party politics.

Finally, we have seen accountability in London practised in the most dramatic fashion - we've lost a Commissioner. There has been much debate on the manner of his going and I'm not going to add to that today. But I do not fear this level of accountability. However, if Commissioners and Chief Constables are to be held to account in this way, then we must be given a chance to succeed.

My belief that I should have the final say in the selection of my top team is well known. How else can I have all the means to maintain good order and conduct at the most senior level, to ensure I have the right people in the right roles to deliver the very things demanded through our governance arrangements and, importantly, our citizens.

It's like Sir Alex Ferguson, or Arsene Wenger (and as a United fan, I prefer the former of course), or any football manager, having the players he can pick bought by the board then getting criticism from the chairman for not having a winning team. That the current system often works through good cooperation between Chiefs and Police Authorities misses the point; the current balance is wrong for a future where accountability is likely to be sharper.

Similarly, I am aware of a view by some that local authorities should have the final say in the appointment of BCU Commanders. I don't agree - but we do need to be smarter about their role in the process. This is something we are currently addressing with partners in London.

Alongside political accountability, there is another challenge over the next ten years, that of financial accountability. Like never before, we need to be efficient and effective stewards of every pound entrusted to us and drive productivity throughout the service. We need to deliver our service at the lowest possible cost

without compromising the quality of our service. In London, we have some way to go before we can proudly proclaim success.

We are going to need the same focus on cost cutting that we have had on reducing crime in the last ten years. This will require tough decisions and a value for money culture that starts with scrutiny of the coffee bill and ends with scrutiny of the national framework contract for forensics or IT. I know that some forces have been undertaking this kind of scrutiny for some time.

We need to be clear and present choices to others about what they are getting for the money they are providing, exactly what kind of policing their money buys and, crucially, does not buy - and I see it as my responsibility to always prioritise front line delivery.

Achieving this will be difficult as we prepare for the Olympics, a national challenge that will impact on our resources and people. I know that together we will deliver a safe and secure Olympics, with the demand being greater on some forces than others, whilst being aware of the potential challenges associated with difficult political decisions about investment in the Olympics and how we deliver business as usual.

Concentrating on productivity must focus our minds on defining our core business. It is easy to become enticed by eye catching schemes that take us away from our core role. Neighbourhood teams across the country are experiencing this - they are increasingly being asked to fill a local void - constraints on our finances will focus our minds on what they can and should be doing. We cannot and should not continue to widen our mission.

An emphasis on productivity will drive changes in our workforce and help us to define our roles and job descriptions more specifically. We will also ask more questions about workforce mix. Forces that succeed will be innovative and progressive.

Increasing the diversity of our work force will improve our productivity. It will increase our skills, extend our influence into communities and help us attract the best from all backgrounds. It is vital that we attract the best leadership from across the spectrum. The police service has come a long way since the transformational moment we faced following the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence.

We still have more to do, but I am proud of the success we are currently achieving in London. One in five of our new police officer recruits come from black or minority ethnic heritage. We have tripled the number of BME officers who work for the Met today and a third of our PCSOs and a quarter of our police staff now come from BME backgrounds. Is this enough? Of course not, there is more to do and the great challenge is to achieve progression of the very best BME officers and staff through to senior ranks and positions.

Put short, we should celebrate what we have achieved and get on with doing much better - it is actions that count, not definitions. There is no doubt that we have learned from the past in a most painful and high profile manner. It is time now to move forward constructively with our partners and staff associations.

As a brand, UK policing is recognised as a world leader - but there is no room for complacency over the next ten years; we cannot rest on our success.

This brings me to police leadership and our capability as leaders in this room. As Superintendents and Chief Superintendents, you are the senior delivery leaders.

Our challenge as leaders is to put things right, tackle parochialism between units and across forces boundaries and expect challenge in return. Leaders should embrace scrutiny and not be afraid to confront those who let us down.

Within this, I believe that the notion of intrusive supervision is critical. Where I see success in policing, I see intrusive supervision. I see leaders accepting the responsibility for the work of their officers and staff. I also see leaders not letting the fear of a litigation culture prevent them from making difficult challenges and decisions. Our staff deserve to have their leaders intruding into their professional lives, finding out how good they are and occasionally finding out that some, thankfully a small number, are simply not up to the job.

As I draw to a close, I want to finish by talking about the pride in policing we need to continue to foster over the next ten years. The evidence of pride is all around us, but first impressions count and small things matter. In London we are trying to renew our pride in the standards we set of dress, language and service.

Having served in a number of forces in very different parts of the country, I am proud of the people I have worked with and the service I am a part of. I want all our officers and staff to be equally proud of what they do, the contribution they make and the success they bring. And I want our staff to be proud of us, their leaders, confident that we are working to ensure the story is about what they achieve as opposed to who we are! We have had a little too much of the latter I think.

As leaders, we should be proud of our history and our culture. UK Policing is revered the world over - let us be proud of that.

I want to challenge us all though to recognise the value of what we do and to work hard to improve and build our service and reputation further.

In this regard, I would like to thank you for what you do for the policing of this country; just in case no else does!

These are complex, sophisticated, challenging times, The next ten years could be more testing of us than the last ten but, fundamentally, I don't believe that our purpose has changed.

I'll finish where I started...

34 years ago, I was told the purpose of policing. We are here to save life, prevent crime and detect crime. I wish you every success in doing just that.

Thank you