

Committee(s): Police Authority Board	Dated: January 2024
Subject: Chair's Update	Public
Report of: James Thomson	For Information

Christmas and New Year period

My sincere thanks go to all those City of London Police officers, staff, Specials and volunteers, and Corporation officers, who worked over the Christmas and New Year period to keep the City, and the country, safe.

Godfrey Baillon-Bending

We received the news just before Christmas that Godfrey sadly passed away in hospital following a heart attack. Our thoughts go to his wife Margaret and his family and friends. I have passed on condolences, on behalf of the Board. And I want to put on record my appreciation for Godfrey's dedication to the City's Independent Custody Visitor Scheme which he approached with care, diligence and a real wish to ensure that he made recommendations that would improve the experience for those in police custody. He will be missed.

City Question Time

I attended the City Question Time event held at the Old Bailey with well some 100 residents together with others including Chair of Policy, Chair of Children & Communities, and Chair of Streets & Walkways. City Police representation included Assistant Commissioner Paul Betts. There were some questions relating to the night-time economy and cycling offences. Residents welcomed the actions by the City Police including Op Reframe and the Cycle Team.

Middle-East Protest

As verbally reported at the December Board, Saturday 9th December saw one of the largest protest marches in the City of London in recent years. Up to around 50,000 people congregated for a Pro-Palestine march commencing at Bank Junction heading towards Westminster. I went to observe the march assemble and head out of the City. I spoke to many officers from the City Police along with colleagues from Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Merseyside, North Wales alongside the usual partners of BTP and MPS. I wish to record my thanks to all involved in what was very largely a peaceful march given the many challenges posed by such public order gatherings.

Op Reframe

In the busy Christmas period, Op Reframe has been operating with greater intensity and I once again observed the multi-agency team in action on 14 December

Budget for 2024/25

The Commissioner and I wrote a joint letter to the Policing and Security Ministers following the publication, on 14 December 2023, of the provisional police funding settlement for 2024/25. There is a separate agenda item on progress on setting the Revenue and Capital budget for next year, which will come to the Police Authority Board for approval in February. We have, in particular, raised concerns about the affordability of our National Lead Force (NLF) work as the funding settlement is essentially allocated to forces based on the current funding formula – essentially core grant for local policing. Given the high proportion of the City's funding outside of core grant this is putting pressure on our ability to maintain officer levels going forward. We are seeking a meeting with Ministers to discuss this issue further.

Stephen Lawrence Day

The Police Authority Team and I had a helpful meeting before Christmas with the Chief Executive of the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation to discuss plans for marking Stephen Lawrence Day in 2024. We are proposing hosting an event in the Guildhall on 23 March, aimed at young people, which chimes with the Foundation's 2024 theme of the power of learning. The Police Authority Team have set up a small working group to develop and organise the event. I would welcome Member support for this important initiative.

Legislation – 2023/24 Parliamentary Session

There are a number of Bills contained in the Government's programme for the 2023/24 Parliamentary Session in which the City Police and Police Authority has an interest. Three have already been introduced to the House: a Criminal Justice Bill (which includes a provision to prohibit the possession and supply of SIM farms), the Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Bill, and the Victims and Prisoners Bill. We will need to engage on the latter, in particular, given the City Police's lead force role on fraud. A fourth Bill has yet to be introduced – the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, more commonly referred to as the "Martyn's Law" Bill. I have asked for a paper on all this to come to the Board in February.

Police Authority Team

2023 saw the Police Authority Team, which supports the Board, almost up to full strength. This has meant that Team members have been able to do more in terms of external engagement on behalf of the Authority. This has included support to the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Association of Police and Crime Chief Executives, engagement with other law enforcement partners on specific issues (e.g. disclosure) or more generally in terms of presenting on governance work and accountability issues (e.g. with the SFO, MOPAC and UK Anti-Doping). A good deal of this is often unseen by Members. But it is nevertheless important. My thanks go to the whole team for their efforts and support in 2023 – I look forward to further building on these foundations in 2024.