

The Baroness Casey of Blackstock DBE CB

Letter sent via email

Sir Mark Rowley QPM
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I want to thank you and your team for this important review into the Met's culture and standards and the dedication and determination you have brought to it. I am pleased that you have found colleagues open and helpful. Their candour shows their passion for policing in London. Indeed, I told the Home Secretary and Mayor in my interviews for Commissioner, that the reason I was confident of success was the passion and determination of the great majority of our people.

Your report represents a powerful and persuasive call for urgent, deep rooted and long-lasting change. You have reflected the views of thousands of officers and staff in the service - people who I know are just as determined as I am to drive meaningful change in the organisation.

You and I have both turned to Sir Robert Peel in our thinking about policing. I have, from my first days returning to policing a few months ago, been outspoken about the scale of reform needed. The mission is undoubtedly the renewal of policing by consent. It is a challenge that demands leadership that is bold enough to meet this pivotal moment in the Met's history. We have a workforce of tens of thousands of inspiring and hard-working officers and staff who are the driving force behind our mission, led by a new senior team committed to empowering them to do so.

The Met is an extraordinary organisation, with many exceptional people who go above and beyond, day in and day out. But as you, HMICFRS, and others have pointed out, we must not let proper pride in that excellence obscure our confrontation of our shortcomings. All of us who have served and are serving must reflect on why we haven't delivered the scale of the change needed.

I have already apologised to Londoners, and to the officers and staff who serve them, for the shortcomings in routine policing, supporting frontline officers and confronting discrimination. I will reiterate it: I am sorry that we have let our communities and officers down.

Importantly, you have explored these issues through the lens of their impact on our ability to deliver operationally for Londoners and to keep communities safe, which must always be our first priority. Your report paints a very vivid picture of this.

We accept the report's findings and will, as you have requested, take the time to carefully consider your recommendations. We have an ambitious Turnaround Plan that is evolving and sets out how we will deliver on our commitment for More Trust, Less Crime and High Standards. Your report is a vital contribution to that work, and this is a time to reflect. As such, whilst we have been beginning to build momentum there is much to do and I will resist the temptation to list the many steps we have taken so far, and those which are planned.

My immediate reflections on your plan fall into a few broad themes.

Our people serving Londoners

Your report acknowledges that the scale of the Met presents unique operational challenges, but it rightly recognises that this cannot be a justification for siloed and disconnected delivery, poor management or the lack of adequate workforce planning, which you so rightly highlight. These undermine our ability to give Londoners the service they deserve.

Reading the personal testimonies of officers and staff who are struggling to manage not only the operational demands placed on them, but also the very real personal and emotional impact of their work was, of course, hard. I am sure it was hard for them to provide them to you. I know from conversations I and other senior leaders have had with those on our frontline that the experiences you have given voice to reflect a reality for too many officers.

Your report draws attention to the growth in demand in areas such as response and public protection. While the reduction in resources you identify is relevant, there is much that we can do, and are doing, to improve through better prioritisation, organisation and leadership. We are determined to change, and I welcome your confidence that we can.

We established our ambition in our Turnaround Plan to set the frontline up to succeed on behalf of victims and communities across London. Your report shows why that is such an essential mission. We must get it right, and we will.

Discrimination

Policing must be the very best in our robust systems and leadership to ensure we are anti-racist, anti-misogynist and anti-homophobic, indeed, we must be relentlessly anti-discrimination of all kinds. We have failed in that respect. In your interim report, you found evidence of discrimination in our ranks, and misconduct processes that showed patterns of unacceptable and systemic bias.

I have said since my first day of Commissioner that we have racism, misogyny and homophobia in the Met and we have not been strong enough at rooting them out. As a result we've let Londoners and each other down. I apologised then and I apologise again now.

Your final report has reinforced this reality and has shown that such bias also impacts on the communities we serve, on their confidence in policing and on our operational effectiveness. We accept that and are committed to tackling it. Trust in policing among London's Black and minority ethnic communities is far too low and trust among other groups – women, the LGBT+ and disabled communities and religious groups for example has also been shaken

The responsibility for strengthening these relationships starts with accepting that the mistrust stems from communities' experiences of policing over decades and from prominent cases – some in the very recent past – that have profoundly shaken public confidence.

I recommit us to ridding the Met of those who exhibit such toxic behaviours and to fixing the systems, management and processes that have failed to tackle it, or have made it worse. This starts with bold leadership, but it is all of our responsibility.

It is also clear that the majority of officers and staff are equally determined to confront and root out those who have corrupted our integrity. They are the route to success in delivering a new approach to standards in the Met, which I have made such a strong feature of my first six months. I have been hugely encouraged by their willingness to support this work.

We are confident that the service of today is changing. We are more diverse, more tolerant, more culturally aware and more sensitive to the impact of our work on communities. However, there are many areas where much more meaningful progress is needed.

Culture

At the core of your review is an examination of the damaging parts of the culture of the Met. You have rightly praised the many hard working, brave and diligent people that serve London. You have also shone a light on experiences of individuals that are deeply troubling and on parts of this organisation where there are deep-seated cultures that have become the norm and have not been robustly challenged.

You have found that some of the most concerning examples of these cultures exist in specialist units, such as our firearms teams, where the closed nature of teams and their isolation from the rest of the organisation has allowed unacceptable behaviours to become ingrained.

These are also areas of the Met that lag behind in terms of diversity and representation and the correlation between these characteristics and the cultural concerns found require serious reflection.

We take your findings in this area incredibly seriously. They will inform and accelerate the work that is already ongoing in relation to specific parts of the Met, such as the review of our Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection Command.

Conclusion

This is a mission that will require the support and involvement of every officer and staff member across the Met. Everything I have seen in the six months since taking on the role of Commissioner convinces me that they are ready for that mission. Together we will build the police service that Londoners deserve. I take heart knowing that you and they are willing us to succeed.

Your report marks the start of a new phase for the Met, one that is relentlessly focused on delivering the reform we have collectively identified is needed. It will take time, and there will be periods of further pain as we confront the challenges we face, but ultimately with the drive and determination of the dedicated, honest, often heroic majority, working with London's communities who we will put first in all that we do, I am confident we will succeed.

I have copied this letter to the Mayor and Home Secretary, and will be making it public.

With all best wishes



Sir Mark Rowley QPM
Commissioner