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**Sir Denis O'Connor CBE QPM**  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary



20<sup>th</sup> January 2012



**LEVESON INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURE, PRACTICES AND ETHICS OF THE PRESS**  
**Witness Statement of Sir Denis O'Connor**

**(1) Who you are and a brief summary of your career history.**

- i. I was appointed Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary in April 2009 and was previously HMI responsible for National Police Agencies and Forces from October 2004. Before joining the Inspectorate I was Chief Constable of Surrey Police from 2000 to 2004.
- ii. I began my career with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) but was appointed Assistant Chief Constable in Surrey in 1991 then Deputy Chief Constable in Kent in 1993. I returned to the MPS in 1997 when I was appointed an Assistant Commissioner; where I remained until 2000. During that time, I led the MPS development strategy following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.
- iii. I was awarded the Queen's Police Medal in 1996, the CBE in 2002 and received a Knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2010. I chaired the ACPO Performance Management Business Area before becoming Vice President of ACPO in 2003, and led the piloting of the National Reassurance Policing Programme – the pre-cursor to Neighbourhood Policing.
- iv. During my time at HMIC, I have conducted a review of the fitness of the current police force structure in 2005 producing a report 'Closing the Gap' which generated a great deal of debate. In addition, my team has provided support to the Olympic Programme, providing a report to initiate action, in June 2007.
- v. I have also undertaken reviews of police capability for Counter Terrorism in relation to the "Pursue and Prevent" strategy. Other significant reviews include Serious and Organised Crime Capability: "Getting Organised" October 2008, the "Prevent" component of Counter Terrorism, and Neighbourhood Policing. We have commissioned analyses, provided commentaries and conducted reviews such as the "Lessons to be Learned from Stockwell", a review of the Policing of Public Protests in the context of G20<sup>1</sup>, the Police Report Card, Value for Money in the police service<sup>2</sup>, and a review of Anti-Social Behaviour<sup>3</sup>. Recent studies have been

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<sup>1</sup> HMIC, July 2009, Adapting to Protest

<sup>2</sup> HMIC, July 2011, Valuing the Police

<sup>3</sup> HMIC, September 2010, Anti-social Behaviour: Stop the Rot

undertaken into police availability<sup>4</sup> and the preparedness of police forces and authorities for the spending period<sup>5</sup>. Most recent reports have included a review of police integrity *Without Fear or Favour*<sup>6</sup> and an assessment of the riots *The Rules of Engagement*<sup>7</sup>.

vi. All published reports by HMIC are available on our website.

### Surrey Police: 2000-2004

- i. In responding to the inquiry it may be useful to describe the context and environment that characterised the activity in Surrey from the time I was appointed Chief Constable in April 2000.
- ii. The Force was facing major changes. Those that had been identified at the time of my appointment included:
  - The Deputy Chief Constable was suspended awaiting trial;
  - The pending amalgamation of three boroughs previously in the MPS into Surrey Police (Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge and Spelthorne) growing the force by over 25% to an organization of over 3500 staff, with a population of 1m and a budget of £119.9m (2000/01 figures);
  - A need to make significant savings of several million pounds year on year due to the effects of the national funding formula;
  - Significant public dissatisfaction with the handling of calls to police at the call centre:
- iii. Surrey, up to this point, had a relatively low crime rate, a supportive Police Authority with a willingness to innovate and a lot of very willing staff in the Force. However, the combination of operational, structural and financial challenges were likely to overtake the operating capability of the Force, indeed there were already indications of that happening.
- iv. Further significant issues emerged:
  - A very significant workload increase beyond that which might have been anticipated – both in terms of 999 calls and crime: total crime rose by around 40% with increases in burglary, vehicle crime and violence. Homicides rose from 4 in '99/'00 to 12 in '00/'01 before averaging out at around 8 a year between '01/'02 and '03/'04.
  - The strength of the existing police infrastructure (intelligence, performance, human resources etc.) to deal with public demand for police response on crime and anti-social behaviour.
  - The expertise of the staff to identify risk and lead significant operations, and the overall ability to relate to public needs and concerns;
  - The ability to relate well to local public needs and concerns in a county with a high community charge;
  - Other major inquiries into the death of soldiers at Deepcut and the M25 rapist.
- v. Following consultation with the Police Authority and the staff associations, and informed by research on police effectiveness, I developed with my chief officer team a strategy entitled 'Staying Ahead'. It comprised several elements including: the introduction of a package of benefits to retain officers thinking of leaving because of the cost of living (2001); restructured geographical commands (2001); the development of existing leaders and an active programme to recruit expertise externally at Superintendent level; the development of Neighbourhood Policing in partnership with Surrey University and Home Office (2001-2004); new call handling and crime bureau facilities(2003) and a new incident handling system (2004). These initiatives

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<sup>4</sup> HMIC, March 2011, Demanding Times

<sup>5</sup> HMIC, July 2011, Adapting to Austerity: A review of police force and authority preparedness for the 2011/12-14/15 CSR period

<sup>6</sup> HMIC, December 2011, Without Fear or Favour: A review of police relationships

<sup>7</sup> HMIC, December 2011, The Rules of Engagement: A review of the August 2011 disorders

were designed to build a stronger more resilient infrastructure to enhance public protection but involved a substantial programme of change.

- vi. In relation to the Amanda Dowler investigation I took a strong interest from the very beginning in: the resourcing and progress of the investigation; ensuring the case was reviewed to reveal investigative opportunities; and securing support from external bodies.
- vii. In turning to the specific questions posed by the Inquiry I have relied heavily on my recollections of events against the background of change set out in the preceding paragraphs. I understand that the Inquiry does not expect an analysis of documents which are currently unavailable to me and I have therefore not sought to refresh my memory by referring to all documentary material nor have I consulted former colleagues. If it assists the Inquiry I would be happy to do so at a later date.

### **Your time as Chief Constable of the Surrey Police.**

**(2) Describe the personal contact which you had with the media whilst Chief Constable of the Surrey Police. The Inquiry would like an overall picture of the type, frequency, duration and content of your contact with the media during your tenure as Chief Constable of the Surrey Police.**

- i. My personal contact with the national media as Chief Constable was largely organized through the press office and focused on dealing with major issues of wide public interest. On a periodic but systematic basis I would meet locally-based press and media to provide an overview on crime issues and policing developments. As Vice President of ACPO (2002-2004) I had a few contacts involving the rest of the ACPO presidential team to describe research related to Neighbourhood Policing.
- ii. I facilitated the involvement of two members of the media (press and broadcast media) to take part in Critical Incident Management Training<sup>8</sup> for operational commanders in 2001. I had actively been involved with others in developing this scenario/role based training in the MPS in 1999 during the Lawrence Inquiry. This training, the use of family liaison officers, the Racial and Violent Crime Taskforce, the development of Community Safety Units in Boroughs and the absence of assumptions in investigations were part of their reform strategy.
- iii. At the suggestion of the then Editor of the Sun, David Yelland, a resident in the county who suggested that Surrey 'presented itself poorly, hiding its light under a bushel', I agreed to him and a member of his staff making a presentation to a range of staff at Mount Browne.
- iv. I became concerned during the Amanda Dowler Investigation that the focus of investigation could be adversely affected by the appetite of the media for Amanda related stories and asked my staff to arrange a formal briefing, within agreed parameters, of the Crime Reporters Association. I was aware of this approach from my experience in Kent and the MPS, where it had been used in certain high profile cases to good effect. I did not attend the briefing as this would usually be conducted by the relevant Senior Investigating Officers who would have a detailed appreciation of all aspects of current operations in relation to the case.
- v. Attendance at events such as the annual Sun Bravery Awards for police.
- vi. During the Amanda Dowler investigation I was asked whether I would support a reward offered to secure information that would assist the investigation by, from memory, the News of The World and the Sun.

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<sup>8</sup> NPJA, 2007, Practice Advice on Critical Incident Management

**(3) Describe what you were seeking to gain for the Surrey Police through your personal contacts with the media.**

Although my personal contact with the media was limited in the way I have described:

- i. The police had been encouraged to be open and transparent with the press to facilitate accurate reporting of crime, seek public assistance and enhance accountability within the boundaries of the law and in pursuit of bringing criminals to justice.
- ii. This was emerging best practice designed to recognise the needs of families, the confidence of victims, and wider impacts touching on security in communities in high profile cases where police effectiveness had been, or was likely to be questioned. In the light of this, I sought to raise the situational awareness of commanders, from Inspector level up to senior staff, around the importance of recognising cases which might potentially have these sorts of impacts; providing a proportionate but adequate response and responding to all these elements including a very probing media, coherently.
- iii. The intention here was to use the opportunity to give my staff, including investigators and commanders, some insight into the approach of a tabloid paper to stories (the presentation by the Sun at Mount Browne was built around the return of Ronnie Biggs from Brazil).
- iv. The Amanda Dowler Investigation was complex and very testing for Surrey Police not simply because of the high profile it assumed in the media, but also because of the absence of witnesses, forensics or a 'crime scene.' I was informed during regular briefings on the progress of the case that there were rumours that some in the media were drawn to look at the family – this would have been damaging and doubly cruel given the suffering the family was already enduring. My intention here was to keep the focus on identifying witnesses, recovering any material relating to Milly and to indicate that Surrey Police were working through a range of possibilities (for example sex offenders within range of the area from which she disappeared).
- v. Representing the force and to congratulate officers who were recognized for their courage and bravery.
- vi. To assist police enquiries in a very high profile case without obvious leads.

**(4) Describe in general terms and using illustrative examples what you consider the media has been seeking from you in your personal dealing with them during your time as Chief Constable of the Surrey Police.**

Information I was likely to have or reactions to events from the top of Surrey Police.

**(5) To what extent did you accept hospitality from the media whilst Chief Constable of the Surrey Police?**

To my recollection I did not accept hospitality from the media aside from occasional attendance at events where I and others were representing the Force, such as the Bravery Awards.

**(6) Insofar as you accepted hospitality from the media, what was the nature of the hospitality that you accepted?**

See (5)

**(7) What did you consider that the media was seeking to gain from affording you hospitality?**

See (5)

**(8) To what extent did you provide hospitality for the media on behalf of the Surrey Police whilst you were the Chief Constable of that force?**

None, aside from sandwiches and refreshments at Mount Browne (Surrey HQ) for local media in periodic updates.

**(9) Insofar as you provided hospitality to the media, what was the nature of the hospitality that you provided?**

See (8)

**(10) What were you seeking to gain by affording hospitality for the media?**

The hospitality provided at briefings as at (8) above was a courtesy for those who travelled to the force and intended to create an environment where a considered dialogue could occur.

**(11) What mechanisms were in place to monitor and record hospitality as between the Chief Constable of Surrey and the media?**

All my meetings and associated hospitality with civic leaders, Government Departments, ACPO and victims of crime can be gauged from my diary as Chief Constable.

**(12) What mechanisms were in place to monitor and record meetings with the media generally?**

See (11)

**(13) Did you ever discuss the media, or media coverage, with politicians whilst Chief Constable of Surrey? If so, how important is such communication and why?**

- i. My recollection is that I discussed media coverage of high profile cases as part of standard confidential updates to the Surrey Police Authority. I discussed media coverage of the Deepcut affair as part of a series of updates to the Defence Select Committee of the House of Commons.
- ii. Such communication is vital in maintaining confidence in police efforts to discover the truth since reporting may not always be accurate. Nor is it always possible to respond to apparent criticism or issues without compromising criminal justice processes or the work of Coroners. It is also necessary to justify the allocation of significant resources and indicate how investigations are progressing.

**(14) Have you ever known or sensed that a politician has put pressure on you to take a particular course of action as a result of lobbying or influence exerted on that politician by the media? If so, please explain (although you need not identify the politician at this stage if you do not wish to do so).**

Some politicians have sought an explanation for cases/issues raised in the media; this is a normal part of the democratic process around policing.

**(15) Did the prominence which politicians gave to subjects ever give rise to pressure to alter policing principles so as to allocate more priority to the subject being given prominence by the politicians? If so, please explain.**

The development of Annual Policing Plans by Police Authorities involves an informed discussion and agreement around general police priorities. Politicians also raised, quite properly in my view a series of issues such as 'raves' (illegal music parties involving trespass on agricultural land) hunting, animal rights campaigning, 'ram raids' (stealing from cash points) and, frequently, local disorderly behaviour. Each of these issues was considered on its merits and, where appropriate

i.e. where the behaviour and harm to the community was evident, then appropriate priority was accorded to those issues.

**(16) Set out your understanding of the type of contact which Surrey Police personnel had whilst you served with the force with the media covering nature, extent, frequency and (in general terms) topics / content.**

Surrey Police personnel were encouraged to be open and transparent with the media within the bounds of their work, whether as local specialist neighbourhood officers explaining their response to local concerns, borough commanders to issues in towns and rural areas or Senior Investigating officers seeking to explain or focus communications with the public to assist with cases.

**(17) Were contacts with the media restricted to certain staff or were all staff able to deal with the media?**

See (16)

**(18) What did you expect the Surrey Police to gain from such contacts with the media?**

To build an open professional relationship with the media and secure fair accurate reporting that did not skew investigations or undermine public confidence.

**(19) What did the media seek from such contacts with your personnel?**

Clearly the media are best placed to answer this, but a range of local reporters, editors and members of the Crime Reporters Association said that they gained a better understanding of the police approach through an open relationship.

**(20) What hospitality were your personnel permitted to accept from the media? Inter alia, were they entitled to accept a meal or drink from a journalist?**

I do not have the guidance on this to hand but would have expected hospitality within reasonable modest bounds.

**(21) What hospitality were your personnel permitted to afford to the media?**

Where a briefing was provided they were able to provide some hospitality.

**(22) What mechanisms were in place to record hospitality as between the media and your personnel?**

I do not have a list of the 'mechanisms' to hand but would have expected an appropriate note of the purpose of my staff meeting the media to be made.

**(23) How (if at all) was hospitality between the Surrey Police (including yourself) and the media policed?**

There was an audit of police spend overseen by the Police Authority and the Professional Standards Department were there to investigate any alleged wrongdoing. The approach to this and internal control mechanisms would have been the province of the Director of Finance.

**(24) Were the hospitality rules governing contact between Surrey Police personnel (including yourself) and the media different from those covering contact with other third parties? If so, what were the differences?**

They were no different for me or my Chief Officers to my recollection, our contact was designed to avoid a conflict of interest. I do not have copies of any guidance that was in place at that time.

**(25) What policies and procedures were in place to record contact between: (a) yourself and the media; (b) senior managers and the media; (c) other personnel and the media. For the avoidance of doubt, the reply to this request should cover both on the record and off the record contacts.**

- i. See (20) above; but in addition
- ii. On (a) all my contacts are evident from my diary but as is evident they were limited to those issues addressed in the above questions.
- iii. On (b) I am aware of a briefing that I authorised with the Crime Reporters Association. I recall that I indicated that that should be documented for future reference.
- iv. On (c), see (2)d

**(26) Were the records of hospitality and/or contact with the media audited and/or policed and, if so, how and by whom.**

This would be a question for the lead chief officer, From memory, there was a hospitality register and a method of claiming for and overseeing expenses but in the context of the known pressures the Force was facing at the time it is fair to say that it wasn't regarded as a major issue.

**(27) In your opinion did the policies and procedures described above: (a) work effectively; (b) were they sufficient; and (c) were they capable of improvement.**

I had no information at the time to the contrary on policies and procedures beyond those set out at (2) and (25)(ii).

**(28) What systems, policies and procedures were in place in the Surrey police to ensure that all members of the force (including civilian employees) knew what was and what was not appropriate contact with the media?**

See (20).

**(29) Are you satisfied that the policies and procedures described above were sufficient and working effectively?**

I am not fully sighted on the details of the alleged contact between the News of the World and my staff during the Amanda Dowler investigation (I have deliberately limited my contact with Surrey Police pending current investigations) so cannot comment on the specifics of this issue. But given what we now know I agree with the direction set out in HMIC report, 'Without Fear or Favour'<sup>9</sup> (December 2011). It suggests that there should be a common framework of reference points for police staff to safeguard the integrity of the police mission. Given developments in communication and partnerships already underway, and in prospect, it would be helpful if the potential vulnerabilities are drawn to their attention as they emerge (see p.5 of 'Without Fear or Favour')<sup>10</sup>.

**(30) What training was in place in the Surrey Police, whilst you were Chief Constable, to ensure that all members of the force (including civilian employees) knew what was and what was not appropriate contact with the media?**

The details of training would have to be provided by Surrey Police but I personally attended attestation of new Constables award evenings, staff seminars, unity events within Surrey where the need to deliver a relevant, considerate and effective service to the public was emphasised (the Staying Ahead strategy was the means of changing the force).

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<sup>9</sup> HMIC, December 2011, Without Fear or Favour: A review of police relationships

<sup>10</sup> HMIC, December 2011, Without Fear or Favour: A review of police relationships

**(31) To what extent were leaks from the Surrey Police to the media a problem during your tenure as Chief Constable?**

To my personal knowledge leaks to the media were not a significant problem during my tenure.

**(32) Was there a particular problem with leaks during the investigation into the disappearance of Milly Dowler?**

I became aware of one 'leak' issue where a detective on the investigation gave inappropriate information to a retired colleague who reported it. The detective involved was, as I remember, admonished and removed from the investigation.

**(33) What systems and procedures were in place to identify, respond to and detect the source of leaks?**

The Professional Standards Department would have responded to any leak issues.

**(34) How many investigations were conducted into actual or suspected leaks from the Surrey Police to the media during your tenure as Chief Constable (if you cannot access statistics please state your recollection in subjective terms as best you can) and how many led to the successful identification of the source of the leak. What was the outcome of the other investigations to the best of your recollection?**

Beyond (32) I do not recall any and have not accessed statistics.

**(35) Was disciplinary action been taken against any member of staff (whether civilian or uniformed) for leaking information to the media during your tenure as Chief Constable of Surrey Police? If so, please identify the number of cases and their outcome. There is no need to identify the person or persons the subject of the disciplinary process.**

See (34) and (32).

**(36) To the best of your recollection what procedures were in place to prevent and/or detect data leaks?**

To the best of my recollection Surrey Police had security processes to prevent data leaks and an assigned member of staff within IT responsible for security issues.

**(37) To the best of your recollection what protections (if any) were in place to ensure that databases used by Surrey Police, including the CISS internal crime system, personnel were not misused?**

See (36).

**(38) What payments (if any) were considered to be legitimate financial transactions between Surrey Police personnel and the media?**

I cannot think of any legitimate payments save for the payment for time and expenses to those involved in scenarios and advice on critical incidents training and development (see (2)(ii)).

**(39) To what extent did you believe bribery of personnel by the media to be a current problem for the Surrey Police (if at all)?**

I was not aware of any issues of bribery of personnel - this would have been a very serious issue and I would have expected to be briefed and thereafter a criminal and disciplinary investigation to occur.



**(40) What steps were taken: (a) to educate your personnel about bribery; (b) otherwise to prevent the bribery of your personnel; (c) pro-actively to detect bribery; (d) retrospectively to investigate bribery; and (e) to discipline personnel (if any) who were found to have accepted bribes from the media?**

See (39) and (30).

**(41) What role did the Surrey Police Service Press Office fulfil? What, in practice, did it do?**

It was the communications gateway for the Force to the external world. The detail of its role can be secured from the Force.

**(42) To what extent did the Surrey Police Press Office exist to manage the Surrey Police's corporate image?**

It existed to promote professional communications by Surrey Police and the identity of the Force as a responsive public institution. Public perceptions of the police and police work are crucially important in retaining public confidence for a challenging mission. There were performance indicators for the Department in its communications work and I asked that those be developed through research on the drivers of issues of confidence and reputation. The results of this research can be obtained from Surrey Police.

**(43) Why was it necessary for the Surrey police to have a press office and what is your view as to its utility and role?**

Yes, see (42).

**(44) What was the media's attitude towards the Surrey Police Press Office? In particular, were they satisfied by the provision of information and the routing of communications through your press office or did they prefer direct contact with individual personnel within the MPS.**

See (2) and (19). (I have assumed that the reference to MPS here should be read as Surrey)

**(45) What role did the Surrey Police Authority play in relation to oversight of the Surrey Police's relations and communications with the media? Do you consider that it would be in the public interest to make any changes to this role? If so, what changes?**

- i. Surrey Police Authority expected to be briefed in confidence and were briefed on Surrey Police communications about serious cases. They probed and questioned the approach being taken in an appropriate way.
- ii. Recent emerging evidence suggests that a commonly shared framework of reference for oversight and governance would be helpful – as summarised in the recommendation at p.5 of HMIC's report 'Without Fear or Favour'<sup>11</sup>.

**(46) What level of contact and oversight was there from the Surrey Police Authority in relation to the Surrey Police's relations and communications with the media whilst you were Chief Constable.**

See (45).

**(47) What level of contact and oversight was there from the Surrey Police in relation to the Surrey Police's policing of the media whilst you were Chief Constable.**

I don't understand this question.

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<sup>11</sup> HMIC, December 2011, Without Fear or Favour: A review of police relationships

**(48) What limitations, if any, were there on staff from the Surrey Police leaving to work for the media and vice versa.**

None in particular for the media, though I do not recollect any member of the Force leaving for such employment.

**(49) Were records kept of those who joined the Surrey Police from the media, or who went on to work for the media after leaving the Surrey Police. If so, please describe the systems in place to the best of your recollection.**

Human Resources Department would have records of the previous employment of all staff.

**(50) To the best of your recollection were there any discernible patterns in the movement of personnel from the media into the Surrey Police and vice versa.**

None.

**(51) What level of awareness and experience were there in the Surrey Police of 'media crime' and in particular: (a) unlawful interception of communications (including the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000); (b) bribery of officials by the media; (c) blackmail; (d) harassment by paparazzi and journalists; (e) traffic and/or public order offences committed by photographers and journalists pursuing stories; (f) inciting officials to communicate confidential information help by the Surrey Police / conspiring with them to obtain such information; and (g) crime within media organisations other than foregoing (e.g. dishonest expense claims).**

I suspect very limited but this question would need a wider investigation at several levels in the force. Had anything come to my notice I would have ensured it was investigated and resolved.

**(52) What sort of priority was given to, and what level of resources were available to deal with the above.**

See (51). I am not in possession of any information to assist in answering this beyond the 'context' at the outset of this response. My recollection is that it was resourced within the context of known Surrey demand.

**(53) Whilst you were the Chief Constable of Surrey Police did contact with the IPCC and/or the Surveillance Commissioner and/or the Information Commissioner ever give rise to questions about leakage of information to the media and/or private detectives? If so, please explain.**

No.

**(54) What was your impression of the culture within the Surrey Police overall in relation to its dealings with the press?**

A desire to be as transparent, effective and as focused as possible without compromising the mission of the Force. Naturally a number of staff were, rightly, apprehensive in dealing with the national media, but they gained in confidence over time.

**Your time with the Metropolitan Police as Assistant Commissioner**

**(55) Please describe your dealings with the media whilst you were an Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.**

- i. I had a lead for Community Relations and South West London (one of 5 areas of the Metropolitan Police district). I also had responsibility for developing a plan to deal with the issues revealed by the MacPherson Inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence.
- ii. My dealings with the media arose from the issues relating to my role especially in relation to the Lawrence Inquiry and were arranged by the central Press Department of the MPS. These ranged from TV documentaries to news bulletins during that Inquiry through to the point where the MPS strategy was implemented.
- iii. Issues arising from my geographical responsibilities were dealt with through the local area press office.

**(56) Please describe your experience and impression of dealings generally between the MPS and the media whilst you were an Assistant Commissioner? How much contact was there; what did the MPS seek from the relationship; what did the media seek from the relationship; what level of hospitality did you witness afforded by the media to MPS personnel; what level of hospitality did you witness afforded by the MPS to the media.**

- i. My memory is that the Commissioner's direction (March 1996) encouraged a practical, open and cooperative approach with the media. It was, on the whole, reactive in nature depending upon the issues of the day. The MPS sought at the time to explain what they were doing, highlight useful work and correct inaccuracies. Of course the MPS hoped the approach would help counter negative perceptions arising from poor or partial communication. The Commissioner of the day met editors of major newspapers from time to time. The Crime Reporters Association had relatively regular meetings where issues of crime and police tactics e.g. Stop and Search were discussed.
- ii. The hospitality I personally witnessed was overwhelmingly of the 'tea and coffee' variety although I was aware that occasionally some members of the media attended leaving parties of officers and there were occasional meals but these were the exception, not the rule.

**(57) What problems and issues (if any) emerged in relation to relations between the media and the MPS whilst you were an Assistant Commissioner of that force?**

There has been an enduring concern within the police about the balance of negative/positive coverage they receive given the risky territory within which they operate. The view emerged towards the end of 1990s that the balance had become overly negative and reactive. There was a tension then, as now an unresolved tension, over the responsibility on the one hand for police to be accountable to the public through the media and on the other to properly and faithfully protect some information.

**(58) Describe the level of contact which you had with politicians whilst you were an Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.**

My contact with politicians as Assistant Commissioner ranged from contact with councillors and council leaders in London and Members of Parliament through to the House of Lords and Ministers and the Home Secretary of the day.

**(59) Was there ever an occasion when you either knew or sensed that politicians were seeking to influence the conduct of the MPS at the behest of, or because of pressure exerted by, the media, or by reason of the prominence given by the media to a particular issue.**

I sensed both frustration amongst some politicians as well as, on occasions, admiration for the police 'can do' ethos. On the former, the MPs' understanding of race and confidence in the competence of police by the public was a cause of frustration. By way of contrast they were moved by the police enthusiasm for partnerships on crime and disorder.

**(60) In what ways did media relations between the MPS and the media differ from those which you have experience of as Chief Constable of the Surrey Police? The Inquiry wishes to understand the differences between media relations issues in a regional force and those in the Metropolitan Police Service.**

- i. The two forces differed significantly in depth of experience, skills and even expectations – the MPS were a much more formidable prospect for the media of whatever form because of the volume of news associated with London. The MPS has an international identity. The organisation had established relationships with journalists and processes for supporting areas of work e.g. community relations or counter terrorism confidential briefings within bounds on complex cases and they had people who were familiar with the way the national media operated in terms of their appetite for particular stories and deadlines.
- ii. Surrey had a small, well-motivated team with limited experience of the national media, little in the way of supporting processes beyond a standard press release and worked on a reactive basis on large events. They were in the process of attempting to develop a relationship with local/regional journalists at the point where I arrived in Surrey. Whilst further away from London a limited reactive response to national issues may have been tolerable, it was much less so on the doorstep of London, given the proximity of the national press, and developing 24/7 broadcast news capacity.

#### **Your time as Chief Inspector of the HMIC**

**(61) The Inquiry is aware of the HMIC's 2011 report *Without Fear or Favour* and its contents. Please set out in your own words the most important findings to emerge from the report and explain the importance and significance of the recommendations as you see them.**

I believe that the heart of the report is that whilst corruption as normally understood exists, it is not prevalent in the police service. But the police service is clearly vulnerable to emerging threats to their impartiality arising from a range of relationships, including those with the media. Equally, by and large, the relationship between the police and the media is necessary and positive and provides opportunities to inform and explain issues to the public. The police service needs principles that enable officers/staff to check the policing purpose for their contact. They need straightforward, unbureaucratic processes to transparently record contact. I do think that the approach to integrity should be commonly agreed and applied. The recommendations are framed to deal with the issues I highlight.

**(62) The Inquiry appreciates that the report has only recently been published but would like an indication of the early reaction to the report.**

The report has been received very positively by forces and authorities and a number have already started to address the recommendations.

**(63) The Inquiry notes the recommendations contained at pp.19-20 of *Without Fear or Favour*. Is it HMIC's intention to perform an assessment as recommended at the last bullet point on p.20 of the report?**

Yes.

**(64) What further action, if any, does HMIC foresee being necessary on its part in the future to ensure that the relationship between police and the media is, and remains, appropriate.**

- i. We are currently considering available research on organisational integrity and legitimacy to see whether that work assists in helping the development of practical approaches.
- ii. The known risks around relationships and use of the media will be a recurring consideration as we formulate inspections.

**(65) From your own HMIC experience, is the HMIC adequately equipped to provide sufficient oversight of relations between the police and the media? What improvements might realistically be made to the system in this regard?**

Please see (64) and yes, HMIC are equipped and resourced to provide analysis, assessments and report periodically but not an ongoing monitoring function in this area.

**Documents**

Documents listed in your letter (a) and (c)-(f) are listed as footnotes in HMIC reports but are not owned by HMIC. Therefore, these should be provided by the organisations named in the references.

I have enclosed at Appendix 1: Duckfoot (2011) *Police Integrity: In the opinion of the general public. Research for HMIC: Finding.*

Yours sincerely



**Sir Denis O'Connor**  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary