



Law & Order Update 10

Andrew Dismore MP

February 2007

I promised to keep you up-to-date on developments relating to policing and law & order. It is a little while since my last report to you on the subject, so I felt I should write to you to explain what's been going on, nationally and locally, especially as we have some good news in the crime figures, locally!

Barnet Police: Senior Officers

Last year saw a change in our Borough Commander. Chief Superintendent Mark Ricketts retired. During his time with us, the crime detection rate increased by 15%, and crime reduced by 8%. He was replaced by Chief Superintendent Steve Kavanagh who came to Barnet on promotion. He has strong experience in criminal investigation, including anti-terrorism, community safety and at senior management level.

Other senior officers at Colindale include the deputy Borough Commander, Superintendent Forrester, whose remit includes community policing, and Detective Superintendent Walton, in charge of police operations and performance.

Crime Statistics: National

In the last statistics from the British Crime Survey, generally recognised as the most accurate figures, the picture is encouraging.

Since Labour came to office, levels of crime as measured by the British Crime Survey show:

- crime down 35%
- burglary down 55%
- vehicle thefts down 51%
- household offences down 36%
- violence down 34%
- personal offences down 33%

The Recorded Crime Statistics in the twelve months to June 2006 show:

- total recorded crime down 2%;
- overall violent crime stable;
- domestic burglary down 4%;
- other burglary down 5%;
- firearm offences down 8%;
- vehicle crime stable;
- other thefts down 6%;
- robbery up 5%;
- drug offences up 16%.

These are the national figures. I am sure, like me, you are more concerned about the local picture.

Crime Statistics: Barnet

So far, this financial year up to the end of November 2006, 4,402 offenders were brought to justice. In November, the police in Barnet made the highest number of arrests for years: 847 arrests in total.

Year on year, (mid December 2005 to mid December 2006), in Barnet:

- total British Crime Survey crime is down 14.3%
- personal robbery (i.e. mugging) is down 21.1%
- theft from the person (i.e. snatch theft and pick pocketing) is down 61.8%
- residential burglary is down 14.5%
- vehicle crime is down 10.1%
- criminal damage is down 9.6%
- violent crime is down 13.6%

In fact, the only significant increase is in commercial robbery (up 25.3%) probably due to a change in the way statistics are collected (attacks on delivery people and their takings are now recorded in this way).

You may have seen the coverage of the crime figures in the local newspapers, which over the last few months have recorded consistently the improvements in crime levels, which the police locally have been achieving.

Police Officer Numbers

The Metropolitan Police is now at its highest strength ever, with 34,000 officers, compared with 25,000 when the Mayor of London was first elected – the lion’s share of the Greater London Authority money raised through the Council Tax has helped pay for this increase.

Locally, the total number of police officers is 558; to this should be added the 84 Police Community Support Officers.

I have been concerned about sickness levels, an issue I have raised with successive borough Commanders. I am pleased that the picture seems to be improving, with levels of police officer absence through sickness now being only marginally above the Metropolitan Police average, and coming closer all the time; it has steadily decreased since February 2003. PCSO sickness is rather better than average.

Safer Neighbourhood Teams

The roll out of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) throughout Barnet was completed last year. Every ward in the constituency now has its own team of a sergeant, two constables, and four police community support officers (PCSO). Five of our seven wards now are up to five PCSOs.

I am pleased to say the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, who I meet regularly has accepted that bigger wards should have extra resources – the threshold he has set means that every ward in Hendon will benefit from this. From the next financial year, each

team will be strengthened progressively, to six PCSO’s in each.

The Safer Neighbourhood Teams have been very successful in responding to local concerns, particularly on anti-social crime.

If you wish to contact your Safer Neighbourhood Team, the sergeant in charge of the team and his/her number is:

WARD	WARD SERGEANT	TELEPHONE
West Hendon	Jim Lachan	07748 111 189
Colindale	Roger Mitham	07843 291 113
Hendon	Steve Peyton	07920 233 742
Mill Hill	Simon French	07920 233 743
Hale	Mick Simpson	07920 233 741
Burnt Oak	Kenneth Mather	07843 291 112
Edgware	Dan Reid	07747 791 197

The teams are under the overall supervision of Inspector Kevin Straughan.

The teams have their bases as follows:

WARD	BASE
West Hendon	Vivian Avenue (opening soon)
Colindale	The Concourse, Grahame Park
Hendon	Vivian Avenue (opening soon)
Mill Hill	Hartley Avenue, next

	to the Library
Hale	Hartley Avenue, next to the Library
Burnt Oak	Edgware Hospital
Edgware	The Broadwalk Centre, Station Road

(NB. please note these are their bases, and are not police stations)

Metropolitan Police Quality of Service Commitment

The Metropolitan Police has pledged to get its officers to all emergencies within 12 minutes and to keep crime victims informed about important steps in the investigation of their cases.

These pledges form part of a list of promises to the public the police have published for the first time. Senior officers say these guarantees are the minimum standard people should expect from police, as they believe good communication with the public is vital.

Other pledges include getting to priority non-emergency incidents within one hour, answering nine out of ten 999 calls within ten seconds and a code of practice for victims. The list of guarantees – known as The Met’s Quality of Service Commitment – is now a legal requirement for all police forces across England and Wales.

Locally, the police are taking this seriously, with follow up of victims; and ‘sampling’ by senior officers, to get feedback of victim ‘satisfaction’ as to the service they received.

Transport Policing

I have received a number of complaints, primarily from local bus passengers, about the need for better policing on public transport.

The good news is that Barnet will benefit from 18 new Police Community Support Officers, concentrating on anti-social behaviour around transport hubs from June this year.

These Safer Transport Teams will be located around bus stations and schools and will focus on anti-social behaviour and disorder. The teams are organised by Transport for London and the Metropolitan Police, with funding secured for the next two years.

They will be managed as part of the Borough policing. I would like to see them more clearly integrated with the ward Safer Neighbourhood Teams than the proposed rules allow, and I have written to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner about this.

Additionally, the Metropolitan Police has its Transport Operational Command Unit (TOCU) with over 1,200 uniformed police dedicated to the bus network, as a whole.

As far as the Tube is concerned, the London Mayor has funded an additional 200 officers for British Transport Police (BTP), who are responsible for policing on the Underground and the main railways, too.

There are a total of 670 officers from BTP on the Tube, and they work to priorities agreed with London underground and Transport for London.

Anti-Social Behaviour

When I review the complaints I receive on “law and order” issues, anti-social behaviour is always top of the list.

I am sure that you would agree with me that anti-social behaviour is a menace to society, disrupting the lives of individuals and harming communities. The Government is committed to tackling such behaviour and to building a modern culture of respect, so that people can go about their daily lives without

fear of intimidation or harassment from a selfish minority.

We have made a range of measures available for tackling anti-social behaviour. Warning letters, acceptable behaviour contracts, parenting contracts, injunctions (including anti-social behaviour injunctions), fixed penalty notices/ penalty notices for disorder and dispersal powers may be used in addition to anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs).

Locally, the police have made good use of fixed penalty notices. In the 12 months to November, they issued a total of 975 of these “on the spot” fine notices, mostly for public order type offences.

Regrettably, the record of Barnet Council, in applying for ASBOs, has been very poor, with only a couple of dozen or so, in the eight years since ASBOs first became available – this compares with about 200 in neighbouring Camden.

I am very concerned about this difference, which I raised with the Prime Minister, during Prime Minister’s Question Time on 10th January, this year. Action needs to be taken to ensure greater consistency between Boroughs, to ensure everyone has the same protection from the disruptive jobs. You can see my exchange with the Prime Minister on my website [here](#).

That was why I was pleased with the recent announcement from the Government that in addition to Councils and the Police, Tenant Management Organisations, including ALMOs, will also be able to apply for ASBOs, without going through the Council.

I have written to the Chief Executive of Barnet Homes, Barnet’s ALMO, to ask her, how she sees these new powers being used, here.

The Government has also introduced two specific support orders that can run

alongside ASBOs to ensure individuals receive the support they need. The Individual Support Order (ISO) is available for 10-17 year olds and provides means by which the underlying causes of their behaviour can be addressed. The Government has recently brought in a similar Intervention Order for adults, which will enable adults to receive treatment for their anti-social behaviour, where that behaviour is drugs related.

By addressing the underlying causes of anti-social behaviour, both the ISO and the new Intervention Order will help individuals to observe the conditions set out in their ASBO and so help them avoid breaking them.

Locally, a new initiative of Chief Superintendent Kavanagh is the Priority Intervention Team, or PIT for short. For the first time, to take on anti-social behaviour, the different teams responsible for ASBOs, alcohol licensing, crime prevention, CCTV, persistent young offenders and the Youth

Offending Team have been brought together under one supervisor, to ensure what is clearly a common sense need to co-ordinate across these various officers and staff.

The National Audit Office has just reported that the majority (65%) of those sampled desisted from anti-social behaviour after just one intervention. However, the report also suggests that over half of those sampled who received an ASBO breached their order, and one third did so on five or more occasions.

It is not the case that a breach of an ASBO means the failure of an ASBO. The orders aim to stop a persistent pattern of behaviour and for the long periods when orders aren’t being breached, communities are spared the intimidation and harassment that lessens their quality of life – behaviour which in the past may have gone completely unpunished. Where breaches are reported, it means that individuals are being monitored, that communities feel confident enough to report

them and if an offender breaches his or her order, there will be serious consequences. The use of these measures is for local agencies to decide at the local level.

Support for Parents and Parenting Orders: Youth Offending

Many people say to me, that parents should take much more responsibility for their misbehaving children. To me, parents are our first defence against anti-social behaviour. So by bolstering the help that's available, where that's needed, we are protecting all of us against anti-social behaviour and saving considerable costs.

Good parenting can be learned: a recent review of parenting classes by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence found that such programmes have a significant, long-lasting positive effect on children and their behaviour. Without good parenting we not only risk a child's future but potentially store up crime problems for the whole of society.

This is not a "nanny state" intervention, but the actions of a responsible government – all the evidence shows that good parenting is really important in determining children's life chances, acting as a protection against poverty, social exclusion and poor academic attainment as well as crime and anti-social behaviour.

Parents say they want help – you only need to look at the popularity of TV programmes on parenting to see this. Research today shows that two thirds would welcome assistance.

Help is available voluntarily, and is being expanded through the Sure Start programme and the new children's centres, such as that just opened at Parkfield in West Hendon, with £1 million grant from the Government.

However, not all parents of offending young people will seek help, or accept it voluntarily,

so Parenting Orders can require a parent to attend a specified counselling or guidance programme. More than one parent may receive a parenting intervention in respect of a young person. The parenting intervention may involve a group programme or work with individual parents depending on the need. From April 2003 to March 2006, twenty Parenting Orders were made in Barnet.

However, this is only part of the story. To tackle youth offending, we also need to make sure young people have positive things to do to use up their energies.

In this respect, I utterly condemn Conservative Barnet Council's cuts in youth services locally, meaning that Barnet now spends less on each young person on average, than anywhere else in the whole country. The cost of the Council's sports facilities, like Burnt Oak Sports centre, is also beyond the means of many of our less well off families and young people. It is hardly surprising that young people hang around street corners in gangs and get up to mischief, if there are no constructive activities available to them.

Providing effective youth services is almost certainly cheaper in the long run than the cost of repairs to vandalised or graffitied property!

Magistrates Court

As you may be aware, Hendon Magistrates Court (on the corner of Goldsmith's Avenue and the Hyde) is undergoing a complete rebuild. Magistrates' service for the borough as a whole will be concentrated there, once completed.

In the meantime, Barnet magistrates "business" is being carried out at Brent Magistrates.

I am somewhat concerned with the performance there, with a quarter of Barnet

case hearings not being able to proceed for one reason or another, tying up valuable police officers in court when they could be on patrol, and causing inconvenience to victims and witnesses from the community.

The delay in hearings for young offenders is well outside the expected timetable, too. This is especially important, as I believe it is vital that young offenders should be brought to justice as quickly as possible after they are caught, so the trial, and if guilty, sentence, have maximum impact.

I have written to the Minister at the Department for Constitutional Affairs who has responsibility for the magistrates' court service, raising my concerns about these problems.

I am confident that once our courts are back in our area, these problems will be addressed, but I also believe interim steps are needed to improve the picture, for the time being.

Domestic Violence

This serious crime has often gone unreported, with victims 'suffering in silence'. The police locally have organised new reporting arrangements, to help women who have suffered in this way, to tell the police about it. Colindale Police Station is running a domestic violence 'drop-in' surgery on Tuesdays and Thursday mornings, from 10 am until 12 noon, for victims to find a sympathetic ear and to report what has happened to them.

Knife Crime

I know that many local people are concerned about the threat of knife crime, especially after the appalling murder of Kiran Prince, the London Academy pupil, knifed outside his Edgware School last year. We should keep a sense of perspective though, in that in Barnet knife crime is comparatively

unusual, and violent crime falling (see above).

It is important that both firm action is taken to strengthen the laws on knives, and that opportunities are made available for illegal knives to be handed in. In my last crime report, I wrote of the knife amnesty planned from last spring. This amnesty led to 89,864 items being surrendered nationally, including 9,145 in London (and 214 locally), including everything from machetes to ice picks.

In the Violent Crime Reduction Act last autumn, we brought in new powers. These include, for schools, a power to search: school staff will have more discretion to search pupils for knives and head teachers will be able to direct their security staff to undertake searches of pupils for weapons.

The changes we are introducing will make it easier for concerned staff to take prompt action to protect children, enabling them to search large groups of children at school whenever they suspect a child may be carrying a knife. A further amendment also increases the maximum sentence for carrying a blade or point in public, or in a school without good reason, from two to four years.

Corporate Manslaughter Bill

This is a measure for which I campaigned for many years – long before I became an MP – since I was a young lawyer representing victims and the bereaved from the King's Cross Fire, in 1987. I even introduced my own private member's Bill several years ago, as a result of which the Government agreed to put forward its own proposals which are now before Parliament.

The proposals offer a more effective sanction for holding companies and other organisations to account. The Bill creates a new offence of corporate manslaughter, targeting gross failings in the way an

organisation has organised or managed its activities, where a substantial element of the failing was at a senior level.

The Bill enables the courts to look at a wider range of management conduct than is currently possible when prosecuting a company for manslaughter. The new offence is linked to existing health and safety requirements.

This is a significant improvement, but as you would expect from me, I am still fighting vigorously for further strengthening of the Bill. You can access my speeches on the issue at 2nd reading, report and 3rd reading by visiting my website [here](#).

People Trafficking

As Chair of the Human Rights Select Committee in Parliament, I presided over our recent inquiry and report into this appalling crime, and the Government's response to it.

I hope you share my concerns about this crime, where women, children and men are conned, co-erced or kidnapped into the most vile forms of exploitation that are nothing less than slavery. Indeed, even our local 'Hendon Times' recently reported the case of a trafficker who lived in our area now serving a lengthy prison term. Whilst my committee was satisfied with progress on law enforcement against the criminal gangs, we recommended more needed to be done to look after the victims.

Our report can be accessed on the JCHR website: [here](#) and my Parliamentary speech is available on my website [here](#).

Organised Crime

The Government is introducing new powers to tackle crime at all levels including people smugglers, drug barons and crime bosses. No longer will individuals or groups be able

to feel they are beyond the law, and we will confiscate their ill-gotten gains.

The new civil court order – the Serious Crime Prevention Order – will hit organised crime gangs by freezing assets or stopping nefarious activities ahead of, or instead of, a criminal prosecution.

This will be backed up with new offences of encouraging or assisting a criminal act with intent, or encouraging or assisting a criminal act, believing that an offence may be committed.

We are also strengthening the recovery of criminal assets by extending powers of investigation and seizure to all accredited financial investigators.

Fraud Trials

In last year's report, I mentioned the Government's plan to ensure that those involved in major frauds were not able to run rings around the system. Big City fraudsters use the jury trial system by bamboozling juries with the complexity of their cases, often lasting many months.

In the three years 2002-2004, there were 19 fraud trials that lasted more than 6 months: six trials during that period lasted over a year.

The Government will tackle white collar crime effectively, by introducing measures to simplify the prosecution of complex fraud cases, so that the guilty can more easily be brought to justice.

The Bill currently before Parliament provides for serious and complex fraud trials to take place without a jury, where a High Court judge is satisfied that the length or complexity of the trial would be so burdensome on a jury, that this is the only way of achieving justice.

Trials without jury will address the double standard whereby convictions are gained in simple, petty frauds but some of the most complex cases either have to be abandoned or never get before a court. It will enable the full criminality of serious fraud cases to be exposed. Currently some cases are cut down, to meet the need to present everything to a jury. Even then, this inevitably prolongs cases, leading to trials lasting many months. It is estimated that non-jury trials might take place in half a dozen cases a year.

Counter Terrorism

The Government remains committed to ensuring that there are in place all necessary measures to tackle all aspects of terrorism. A review of current capabilities and resources is already under way to ensure that the UK is equipped to deliver a step change in our approach to tackling terrorism over the next decade.

If as part of this review gaps are identified, then the Government will legislate to fill those gaps, taking into account lessons learned from the foiled airline plot police operation last summer.

As I hope you are aware, this is an issue in which I have taken a particular interest, raising in Parliament the activities of extremists over many years, from long before it was identified as a major concern.

I am pleased that at long last, two of those who I campaigned against, Abu Hamza (now serving a lengthy jail sentence, with his appeal rejected), and Omar Bakri Mohammed (now in the Lebanon, refused entry back into the UK) are out of circulation. But the battle continues to deal with others, who incite and foment terror with their poisonous message.

You may be interested to know that as part of my work as the Chair of the Human Rights Committee in Parliament, we published a report last summer, emphasising the

obligation on the Government to protect the public from terror, as part of human rights law. We also put forward a number of positive proposals for improvements to the criminal justice process, including a stronger role for the Crown Prosecution Service; the need to allow intercept evidence in court, so that juries can hear evidence obtained by telephone taps; and an end to the ban on interviewing suspects after they have been charged with offences. Suspect terrorists should also be charged on a lower level of evidence than required under the full Crown Prosecution Code.

We believe these ideas would make it much easier to secure convictions on terror suspects, and the Government are considering these. Human Rights law is concerned not, as some suggest, only about the suspect rights – it is a fundamental principle that people are protected from crime, including terrorism!

Our report can be accessed on the JCHR website: [here](#) and my Parliamentary speech is available on my website: [here](#).

I hope that you have found this report of interest. I always want to hear back from local residents so if you have any comments, or questions not dealt with in this report, please feel free to email me at updates@hendonlabourparty.com, write to me at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.