

The questions below were sent in via our @MPSBarnet, @MPSBrent and @MPSHarrow Twitter accounts.

The session was conducted on Tuesday 9th October 2018 at 6pm.

The video responses by Simon Rose were uploaded to Twitter and have been recorded below.

1. “What do you see as the main challenges of this merger?”

“I think there are two main challenges of this merger. The first one is logistics, we are moving quite a few people from one location to another but basically that’s the deck chairs being moved on a ship. A far more fundamental challenge is we are moving over to a model where most officers will investigate and follow through with the enquiries they start. This is something we only did 20 years ago in the Met and it’s a model being used elsewhere around the country. What’s good about this? It means that for a victim of crime, when an officer reports this crime, they meet the investigating officer there and then and there is continuity but fundamentally the challenges are our officers getting used to this MI Investigation process because it hasn’t been done this way in the Met for some time and the logistics of moving around large numbers of people”.

2. “How will the merger help increase security in areas such as Harlesden?”

“The merger doesn’t mean a reduction in the number of officers to the Borough. It’s a reorganisation of what we’ve got. The benefit of it is that areas such as Harlesden, Wealdstone High Street, South Harrow and the Grahame Park Estate we have a much bigger pool of officers in one big team in order to make them available to deploy at the times of peak times and those high demand areas. It’s actually a more efficient way of working with what we’ve got, to where we are putting it and where we need it the most”.

3. “Does that mean one fast response vehicle for all of North London?”

“No, we certainly haven’t got one vehicle for the whole of North London. So the minimum strengths on an early turn, early shift, is 77, on a late shift its 86 and a night duty is 82. That’s quite a lot of officers but it’s a big bit of land. There’s 3 large area cars, 43 emergency response vehicles, IRV’s we call them and 6 station vans. So there is 50 plus vehicles available for deployment. They aren’t all going to be driving around at the same time, some will be in custody, some will be on enquiries but it is a very large pool of vehicles and officers available to deploy to demand.

4. “Will the merger result in any changes in the overall number of active Police officers across the three Borough’s or the distribution of officers across different parts of the Borough?”

“So we are still going to have the same number of officers we had before. We will have in February, the serious sexual offences and child abuse team will also be based locally but at that time their work will come with them. So fundamentally the number of officers we’ve got aren’t going to change. In relation to the distribution, because Harrow custody suite closes and we go to an East and West patrol site based out of Colindale and Wembley, the emergency response officers will patrol from two sites rather than three. So the patrol base changes but the number of officers we had before and afterwards stays the same”.

5. “In the context of recent firearms incidents in Harrow, how can residents be assured they will receive a sustained (or improved) level of Policing following the merger?”

“I think the recent firearms incidents in Harrow is actually quite good proof that this can demonstrate an improvement in service, because as a result of being one BCU, I as the Borough Commander have access to the proactive assets of all 3 Borough’s and following the incidents in Harrow, we flexed officers from Barnet and Brent into Wealdstone and South Harrow and other Harrow as necessary to resource the demand there. So if your actually looking for a case to prove that larger teams demonstrate more resilient processes and enable to deploy to the needs of Harrow as and when they rise, on that basis this is very good proof that it works”.

6. What is the impact on Police response times as a result of Harrow Station closing?

“Currently Harrow has one of the best emergency 999 response times in London. Approximately 92 – 94% of all 999 calls, we arrive within 15 minutes. After we have merged the emergency response times at Harrow will still be within target. The target is 90% of emergency response calls will be answered within 15 minutes. The officers will be parading from Wembley rather than Harrow, if you look at an AA route planner, its 9 minutes’ drive, obviously its far less if you’re using blue lights and sirens and the cars will be deployed across the whole of the East and the West of the Borough or the BCU accordingly. So after the merger, we will still be meeting our response times”.

7. “Where will members of the Public be able to find a physical Police response in Harrow without calling 999/101?”

So this is one of the things that doesn’t actually change at all. Harrow front counter will still be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Harrow Police Station will still have Police officer’s working out of it. That will not change. The building is actually getting refurbished next year. So every single way you have to contact Police in Harrow prior to the merger is still the same afterwards. It doesn’t change”.

8. “What impact will the merger have on Police availability for non-emergency activities, such as partnership working across the Borough?”

“The relationship we will have with partners will change after the merger. We are going to a model where we will have one partnership team, a larger partnership team, servicing the needs of three Boroughs rather than one. So it will be centralised, a lot of that partnership work is being delivered from South Harrow Police Station but the number of officers in that role doesn’t change. Their location does change but one of the biggest change, significant change is that it is slimming down the management structure. So it is fair to say that our attendance at meetings or senior officers presence at the more discretionary meetings will be less because the best way to protect the front line is to slim down the management. That is one of the things that has happened and you will certainly see one Borough Commander for three Boroughs rather than previously three for three.

9. “How will resources be managed across crime hotspots on the 3 Boroughs?”

“The process we will use to manage Police resources across the three Boroughs is the same as it was before but rather than having three coordination and tasking meetings, we will have one that will look at the risk across the three Boroughs. The available pool of assets will be much larger and it will be allocated according to threat, harm and risk. So for us at the moment across the BCU it is Harlesden, Wealdstone High Street and to some degree the Grahame Park Estate”.

10. “How will resources be evenly split and prioritised to the needs to the respective areas?”

“The resources are going to be allocated with the use of the TTCG (Tasking and Tactical Coordination Meeting). That will allocate resources to threat, harm and risk. The Borough or the BCU will also have an East and West patrol site and the line has been divided so that demand is about 59% and 41%. The officers in the East will responding to all of Barnet and the South East corner of Brent demands and the officers in the West, will be responding to the rest of Brent and all of Harrow’s demands. That is about 50:50 but the extra asset will be targeted at the central coordination and planning meetings”.

11. “How can you reassure residents that the tri-borough merger won’t lead to more street crime? What are you doing to persuade the Government to release urgent funds to Sadiq Khan to keep our communities safe?”

“Clearly it’s not my role to lobby the mayor to bring extra funds or officers into policing but in relation to the tri-borough merger and how it’s going to affect the deployment of the resources, I think, well I know as I have been party to the decisions and have made the decisions, when we had the significant crime incidents at Harrow we flexed, or I flexed extra officers from Barnet and Brent into Harrow to respond to that, so that’s actually a benefit to the tri-borough merger. We have a bigger pool of officers that can deploy according to the peaks and spikes in demand, which Harrow has benefited from”.

12. “Where are the Police on the streets?”

“So the question, where are the Police on the street? Unfortunately if when you look out your front room you don’t actually see an officer walking past or driving past at the actual time they walk and driving past, you will never know they’ve gone past. So for example we have a minimum strength of 77 officers on an early shift and 86 officer on a late shift and 72 officers on a night shift. We have a total of 53 marked and a couple of unmarked vehicles deployed every day and these are the vehicles and officers who are on patrol on the three Boroughs. The fact you don’t see them, does just mean that you don’t notice them when they walk or drive past or you don’t happen to look out of your window when they go past your address but they are there, honestly!”

13. “What is the cost of this restructure cost the public purse?”

“The restructure is actually being done to save money and to protect the frontline. So a lot of the amalgamation of Boroughs into BCU’s or the closing of Police station, it saves money. The whole amalgamation process actually saves 73 million, which equates to 1583 frontline

officers. So a big driver for this is making better use of what we've got. It's actually about saving money, not wasting money".

14. "Can you confirm that the three Boroughs will be safely policed under the new BCU structure?"

"Well that's what I am going to be held accountable for by the safer neighbourhood boards, by the Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Mark Simmons, who is my boss and the Commissioner. That is what I am charged with being responsible for delivering. I believe yes it will".

15. "Police are struggling to cope with rising crime will there be investment in police cars, CCTV?"

"So there is going to be no extra investment in Police cars and CCTV. What we are actually investing in is mobile technology so that officers with these tablets can take a report at the scene and give a victim of crime, the crime reference number at the scene and then go on to the next job. If you look at how policing is being delivered since 1829, there's this yo-yo process - You'd go out in 1829, you came back and wrote it up with a quill and bit of parchment probably. The ins and outs have fundamentally been the same until very recently. Only now that the officers have got tablets, they go out and take details on the street, enter the crime report on to the database and give the victim the details then. They don't need to go back to the Police Stations and that efficiency - that is the investment in technology is helping to make a difference".

16. "Which units will create the new NW unit?"

"So very simply, what's being merger to create this North West BCU are the Boroughs of Barnet, Brent and Harrow. There is a slight extra to that, if you like and a quite positive extra. The Sapphire, which is the sexual offences, the rape, indecent assault investigations and the child abuse investigations are also coming back to the Borough with the investigating officers. So with the good news around that is previously if you had a victim of domestic abuse rape, domestic abuse assault and there were child abuse allegations, there would be three separate teams dealing with that. Now there will be one team dealing with whole thing at the same Police Station. You will get more efficiency, better victim service, continuity and a more integrated Police response".