
BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE AUTHORITY

MINUTES
SPECIAL POLICE AUTHORITY
TUESDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 2005

at
HOLIDAY INN, CORAM STREET, BLOOMSBURY, LONDON

Present: Sir Alistair Graham (Chair)
Sir David O'Dowd
Mr L Adams
Mr M Brown
Mr C Foxall
Mr R Gisby
Mr J King
Ms C Knights
Suzanne May
Mr R O'Toole

Apologies: Mr M Holden
Mrs W Towers

In Attendance: Mr I Johnston, Chief Constable
Mr A Trotter, Deputy Chief Constable
Ms S Budden, Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Mr D McCall, Assistant Chief Constable
Mr P Nicholas, Assistant Chief Constable
Mr P Robb, Assistant Chief Constable
Mr A Pacey, Acting Assistant Chief Constable
Mr P Zieminski, Chief Superintendent, Strategic
Development
Ms M Daniels, Deputy Head of Strategic Development

Mr R Hemmings, Chief Executive & Clerk
Ms D McGovern, Deputy Clerk
Mrs E Pike, Treasurer
Mrs S Elvy, Research and Policy Officer
Miss L Barrick, Meetings Manager and Minutes
Miss L Bryant, PA

Ms V Bodnar, DfT
Mr D Rea, DfT (part)

02/2005
Non-Agenda

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Ms Bodnar and explained that the meeting was an opportunity for Ms Bodnar to address the Authority regarding the review of BTP and for Authority members to ask questions and raise their concerns.

01/2005 **APOLOGIES**

Non Agenda

Sir Alistair gave apologies from Mr Holden and Mrs Towers.

02/2005 **INTRODUCTORY PAPER**

Agenda item 1

Mr Hemmings stated that the paper was to set the scene for the meeting and that he had nothing further to add.

03/2005 **PRESENTATION FROM DfT**

Agenda Item 2

Ms Bodnar began her oral presentation to the Authority by explaining the process the review was following. Ms Bodnar explained that the review was looking at how railway policing should be carried out in the future, for example whether the rail network should be policed regionally, nationally or by the industry. The terms of reference look at the current structure and future needs of the network and take into account the policing of other transport modes and funding arrangements. It would be for the Secretary of State for Transport to make the ultimate decision.

Ms Bodnar stressed that the DfT's review was not being driven by the Home Office but was running parallel with the Home Secretary's review of the Home Office Forces. She felt that it was appropriate to keep in time with the Home Secretary's review because if changes were going to occur to Home Force's, it would make sense to marry these with any changes to BTP.

Ms Bodnar stated that she was consulting many different parties regarding the review, including the Industry, Rail Passengers Council, London Travelwatch, Transport for London, London Underground, ATOC, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly and more. Ms Bodnar said that the DfT wanted to meet with stakeholders with different interests and would be happy to receive anything in writing. Ms Bodnar said that she was happy for email address to be given out so people could write to her. She had agreed to share the evidence that she had received, although she pointed out that it would be for the Secretary of State to decide whether and when to share any preliminary conclusions.

Ms Bodnar then moved on to the review itself and briefly explained the form this was taking. She began by explaining that she and her team had identified four categories that they felt covered BTP's role these included:

1. To keep the railways running, including such matters as trespass and fatalities on the line.
2. Safety of rail staff, customers and their possessions.
3. Security of rail community assets, including matters such as graffiti, break-ins etc
4. Protective security (Level 2 Policing) including matters such as public order, counter terrorism and serious crime.

Ms Bodnar accepted that not all matters that BTP dealt with fitted nicely into these categories and gave the example of the role BTP play in policing football trains that could be categorised as both safety of staff/passengers and protecting assets.

Ms Bodnar informed the Authority that the review was to be evidence based and they had begun evidence gathering.

04/2005

Agenda Item 3

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chair commenced the question and answer session by asking about the timetable of the review. It was his understanding that the DfT were hoping to put recommendations before Ministers in December, but he wanted to know when conclusions would be drawn from these, as he felt there needed to be more clarity with regard to timescales.

Ms Bodnar responded that the review team was hoping to make recommendations before Christmas, with the bulk of the work being completed by 23rd December 2005. However, timescales for making announcements after Christmas had not been decided upon by either the DfT or the Home Office, and it may be that they request extra work to be carried out. Ms Bodnar again stressed that the reviews were separate but that it was useful for them to run along a similar timetable.

The Chair then asked about the MPS bid to take over policing the railways inside of the M25. The Chair stated that this was a considerable chunk of BTP, and that if it was handed to the MPS this would leave a much reduced Force.

Ms Bodnar replied that any decision in respect of policing would be made by the Secretary of State for Transport. She confirmed that the MPS had put a bid forward for the rail network within the M25 and that this option would be examined, as part of which the impact on the rest of the rail network and the structure of BTP would be considered.

Funding arrangements were then questioned by the Chair, who asked how these would be worked out if railway policing was divided between the Home Forces.

Ms Bodnar stated that the government remained committed to the costs of BTP being largely funded by the industry. The Chair questioned the use of the word "largely", to which Ms Bodnar said that this simply meant "largely", and commented that in the past the DfT had given BTP money for specific items, and this was its only significance.

Sir David said it had to be remembered that acquisitions were easy but mergers were much more difficult, and it had to be ascertained that there was a business case.

Mr King noted that ACPOS and non-ATOC TOCs were missing from Ms Bodnar's consultation list, to which she replied that she would be going to Scotland to meet with ACPOS, ScotRail and the Scottish Executive from whom she would take a lead on whom else to consult with. She said the list had not been meant to be comprehensive. With regard to non-ATOC TOCs Ms Bodnar said that she would be happy for them to write to her.

Mr Brown questioned the impact for policing the rest of the network if London was transferred from the BTP. He also stated that, with respect to terrorism, having BTP working alongside TfL had made the response to 7 July a less painful process, and he wanted to be sure that the review was picking up lessons learned from the way BTP and industry deal with the aftermath of terrorism.

Ms Bodnar said this was something that the MPS had said they felt they could do better and that they had been asked to provide evidence regarding how.

The Chair asked about the work that was being carried out by HMIC for the review, and asked what role did this play in the review.

Ms Bodnar stated that HMIC had carried out a protective services review of each Home Force and identified that BTP had a role within this. Ms Bodnar said that the problem with this was that the methodology had been written for Home Office Forces so was not all relevant to BTP. The HMIC were looking at these guidelines and making them relevant to BTP. In addition some of the statements made in the baseline assessment would be revisited in the correct context for BTP.

The Chief Constable was concerned that the uniqueness of BTP was not being captured by the review as a whole. He also raised concerns about the tight timescales in which the evidence was to be gathered.

The Chief Constable said that although he had numerous issues with the review, the one which most concerned him was, what was it that BTP were being judged against, where was the gap? The Chief Constable referred to the categories that Ms Bodnar had laid out, and pointed out that BTP has a strategic plan that lays out the responsibilities and direction of the Force categories relevant to its policing requirements. The Chief Constable said that he was concerned that there must be a firm and agreed platform against which BTP was to be judged and assessed, but this did not yet exist.

Ms Bodnar said that it was important to remember that HMIC were looking at protective services rather than Level 1 policing and said that she had asked for disagreements between HMIC and BTP to be resolved before the review concluded. The Chair asked how she proposed this to be resolved and Ms Bodnar replied that the team at DfT had decisions to make regarding this by drawing together all the evidence and making sense of it.

Suzanne May said she was conscious that the boundary of the M25 mentioned in the MPS bid for BTP (London) was not viable as TOCs did not operate in that way. Ms Bodnar responded that at present the MPS were just flagging up their interest and were not pretending to have researched the option thoroughly. Suzanne May asked, considering the tight timescales, would they have time to research this thoroughly? Ms Bodnar replied that it was not for MPS to provide all the information. Suzanne May went on to ask why there was such a tight timetable and Ms Bodnar said that the timescales had been set by the Secretary of State.

The Chair asked what was driving the Secretary of State. Ms Bodnar replied that he wanted to marry the review of BTP with any major change in the Home Office Forces, but that the review was running in parallel with the Home Office review, keeping a close watch on their deadlines but not being driven by it.

Suzanne May made the point that the categories overlook how different BTP is from Home Forces when you look at things such as football trains. Suzanne May stated that as there are no county boundaries at present it makes this much easier to police and that if boundaries were set up it would make this very complex to police.

Mr Adams raised the concerns of the staff within the rail industry, saying that they were concerned about a large period of change again following the privatisation of the railways. Mr Adams made the point that Police performance affected the industry using the example that every year the industry loses 900,000 minutes through unsocial acts at a cost of £280M, however this used to be 1.2M minutes and the clearing of fatalities had been reduced to within 90 minutes from 2 hours, and it is BTP skills and expertise that have lowered these. Mr Adams suggested that if the policing of the railways went to other Forces delays would become much longer and many more minutes would be lost due to inexperience and an inadequate skill base for dealing with the railways. Mr Adams also discussed dangerous goods trains such as those carrying nuclear waste and the many other unique activities of the railways. Mr Adams concluded by saying that the staff thought it strange that following recent terrorist events and the good relationship between BTP and the rail industry that there should be talk of changing things. Mr Adams said that he would be emailing Ms Bodnar with these concerns, as he felt there would be a catastrophe if the railways were not policed properly.

Mr Foxall said that there was a concern among passengers that there would be more disruption to rail services if changes were made to the structure of BTP. Mr Foxall asked what role Ms Bodnar felt the Authority were to play in the review.

Ms Bodnar said that the DfT may come to the Authority for information regarding any options that may arise following evidence gathering, to see if there are issues that they have not considered.

The Chair asked who would be paying for any changes as there would inevitably be costs. Ms Bodnar said that this would be looked at as part of the options, but savings would be made further on. The steering group had not seen the business plan as yet but they were putting together estimated costs at this stage.

Mr O'Toole said that BTP had showed their worth on 7 July, showing they could deal with serious crime. Mr O'Toole also stated that the industry was going through significant change as there were too many interfaces and people should be working to consolidate these. Without BTP would the industry still be getting the same level of service? Mr O'Toole also raised the issue of Football trains and that having to police these taking into account county boundaries would make this very complex.

Mr Gisby said that he could not imagine running the network without some form of national specialist in the area. Mr Gisby also raised the issue of funding and said that BTP was a first class operation and he could not imagine losing it after building up such a good relationship, particularly over the last 2 years.

Sir David raised the point that there would be a fragmentation of funding were the railways to be policed by Home Forces. Sir David asked if the Force were expected to bid to police other transport modes. Ms Bodnar replied that there was nothing to stop BTP from bidding to police other transport modes if they had a serious interest, but that it would be worthwhile for BTP to look at lessons learned in the policing of other transport modes particularly with regard to their funding arrangements.

Assistant Chief Constable Robb asked if DfT were using a framework for assessing evidence, and if so would this be shared? Ms Bodnar said that there was a number of criteria related to the things identified earlier in the meeting. ACC Robb asked about the distinction between evidence gathering and implementation, as it seemed to be suggested from the discussions that there could be changes to implement. ACC Robb asked if status quo was an option. Ms Bodnar responded stating that status quo was an option, but that there may still be things that need looking at in this case.

The Chair thanked Ms Bodnar for her time and drew the meeting to a close. The Chair requested that the Authority have sight of any influential evidence, and any options developed to consider their practical implications.

Signed.....

Chairman