

David Cameron challenged over Gwent Police row

The prime minister has been challenged in the House of Commons over the way Gwent Police's ex-chief constable was forced out of her job.

Newport West MP Paul Flynn said police and crime commissioner Ian Johnston was "a vindictive bully" who told Carmel Napier to resign or be humiliated.

David Cameron responded that the job was designed to ensure accountability.

In June, Mr Johnston said he ordered former chief constable Carmel Napier to "retire or be removed".

On Tuesday Mr Johnston and Mrs Napier gave evidence to MPs on the Home Affairs Select Committee about the circumstances of her retirement.

Mr Johnston told the committee Mrs Napier was "unacceptably unhelpful" and was hostile to his role.

Mrs Napier told the committee she was forced to resign following "menacing and bullying" treatment by Mr Johnston.

Now the issue has been raised with the prime minister in the House of Commons.

Labour MP Mr Flynn asked David Cameron: "Was it your conception when you set up the office of police and crime commissioners that a fine chief constable such as the one in Gwent should have her career cut short by a vindictive bully who told her to resign or he would humiliate her?"

Mr Cameron said: "The point of having police and crime commissioners is to make sure there is proper accountability and that police [chief] constables have to account to a local person, and that is why a number of former Labour Members of Parliament stood for this post."

Earlier on Wednesday, Mr Johnston was criticised by Labour's Vale of Clwyd MP Chris Ruane, who sits on the Home Affairs Committee.

Mr Ruane said he thought Mr Johnston "should reflect on his position".

He told BBC Radio Wales he felt Mr Johnston came across as "quite brash and overly forceful" in his evidence to the Commons committee, while Mrs Napier was "quite reasonable".

He said he thought Mrs Napier should take "careful advice", adding: "I feel that she was treated unfairly."

In response, Mr Johnston said Labour were "still smarting over losing what should have been an easy victory in the PCC (police and crime commissioner) election in Gwent, and they should move on and now focus on serving the people who elected them".

He added: "In terms of Mr Ruane's comments about unfair dismissal, I am sure that Mrs Napier's legal team would have taken this forward if they felt there was any chance of a successful process."

He said Gwent Labour MPs held a "crisis meeting" with Mrs Napier last year "because they were unable to work with the chief constable", adding: "They obviously have short memories."

Police and crime commissioners were elected in England and Wales last November following UK government legislation.

After Mrs Napier announced she was retiring from her 30-year career in policing last month, it emerged she had been forced out by Mr Johnston.

Mr Johnston confirmed his ultimatum to Mrs Napier after documents were leaked to the [South Wales Argus](#).

Both were called before the Home Affairs Committee in Westminster on Tuesday.

'Menacing and bullying'

Mrs Napier told MPs she did not know the commissioner had concerns about her position until a meeting on 23 May, in which he produced a document.

She said: "I felt that the tone of the document and how he delivered it was both menacing and bullying.

"I felt actually from the tone of the note, that it was a clear threat - retire or resign. Or actually, horrible words 'I will humiliate and dismiss you'. That is what rang in my head."

In his evidence, Mr Johnston said it was clear Mrs Napier was "hostile" to his role as Gwent's police commissioner.

He told the committee the pair did not get off to a "very auspicious start" after he found out in his first week in the role that the chief constable had warned staff that anyone who had contact with him would be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Of their first meeting, he said: "It wasn't a very productive hour and it left me in no doubt as to where I stood and how she saw the role of the PCC, which didn't accord with my role."

He said he believed her managerial style to be "unacceptably dismissive, abrupt and unhelpful", although he conceded he did not think she was incompetent as chief constable.

[More Wales stories](#)



['Extensive' abuse at care homes](#)

[\[news/uk-wales-23199905\]](#)

A report written 17 years ago identifying "extensive" abuse at children's homes in north Wales in the 1970s through to the 1990s is finally published after a BBC Freedom of Information request.

[Sea search family 'worried sick'](#)

[\[news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-23220562\]](#)

[X Factor Nicole's birthday surprise](#)

[\[news/uk-wales-23232072\]](#)