



Rt. Hon Theresa May MP  
Secretary of State for the Home Department  
The Home Office  
Marsham Street  
London  
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17 August 2011

Home Secretary

Your speech yesterday ('The urgent need for Police Reform') included quite extraordinary allegations about the work of Police Authority Chairs up and down the country:

***"In London, the Mayor was on the streets of his city, working with the Acting Commissioner and representing Londoners to central government. The contrast with unaccountable, unelected and invisible police authority chairmen in other parts of the country could not have been clearer."***

This un-evidenced, London-centric assertion was either regretfully ill-informed or wilfully inaccurate. In either case we believe it to be unbecoming of a Secretary of State. It has caused not only bemusement but anger amongst police authorities and our partners across the country.

Quite simply, your allegations are completely untrue and a cursory conversation with the relevant Chief Constables, Council Leaders or representatives of local media could have confounded it.

The facts are that not only Chairs, but the full range of diverse police authority members were out listening to communities and reflecting their concerns to the police at the highest levels in GOLD meetings across the country. Authorities provided both support and appropriate challenge to forces. We worked closely with Chief Constables to ensure that they had all that they needed to police confidently, with full operational independence in defence of the public. Both in public and in private, we simply got on with the job. Police Authority Chairs were out on the front foot; convening meetings with the leaders of other emergency services, local councils, local media and community leaders, as well as visiting affected areas.

It is a matter of record that a number of Police Authority Chairs actually *cancelled* their leave to ensure that the police could respond to public concerns. Before any politicians could tour the streets of London with TV cameras in tow, Police Authority Chairs from across the country had agreed the

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mutual aid which played an indispensable role in restoring order to London and ensuring that those streets were again safe to stroll. This was done without fanfare, but quietly, in the national interest.

It did not escape our notice that having insinuated that Police Authority Chairs did *not* represent their communities to central Government, in your speech you also said how helpful the Chairman of Greater Manchester Police Authority had been in relating the concerns of his community to you, and how his personal representations led the government to issue directions from COBRA.

Police Authority members are the much talked of 'big society' in action; groups of diverse politicians *and independents* giving their time to the community, irrespective of the publicity that they attract. I'm sure you would agree that we are in a sorry state if the worth of public service is only measured by the number of column inches it fills in the newspapers or the minutes it merits in national media.

It goes without saying that the APA and the Government have completely different views on the future of policing governance. But that disagreement is no justification for an inaccurate, and what some have seen as a politically motivated attack on our response to this emergency.

Police authority members have not only given dedicated service but helped deliver results to the public, namely; falling crime, rising public trust and confidence and a meeting or exceeding of every government efficiency target to date. As the recent HMIC inspections made clear, of the 22 of 43 authorities inspected by HMIC, none failed and over 97% of 110 HMIC assessments were scored Excellent, Good or Adequate.

Whilst others may command the airwaves, authorities continue to get on with the job; delivering savings, preparing for cuts, holding constabularies to account, planning for any possible transition and highlighting the public's concerns to both politicians and the police at the highest levels.

The APA has no desire to 'pick a fight' on this issue with you or the Government – we remain as committed as ever to working within the Tripartite to shape policing in the public interest. But we could not let such inaccurate comments pass without response. Our sincere hope is that they were more ill-informed than maliciously meant.

Yours,



Cllr Rob Garnham,  
APA Chair, Conservative



Ann Barnes JP,  
APA Deputy Chair, Independent



Cllr Mark Burns Williamson  
APA Deputy Chair, Labour



Cllr Brian Greenslade  
APA Group Lead, Liberal Democrat

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