

November Newsletter

Dear West Londoner,

In Northern Ireland, I patrolled the streets of Belfast alongside the RUC. In London, my Regiment provided mobile military support to the police guarding Heathrow. As a former uniformed public servant, I have always felt a kinship with police officers. I have always been the first to leap to their defence - always given them the benefit of the doubt.

I am not sure I can offer my instinctive support to our local police service anymore. Recent events have combined to undermine my basic assumption, which is that they operate as effectively as they can within wide-ranging constraints and under relentless pressure.

You see, some calls to Ealing Police Station go unanswered. Some calls to 999 go into a queue, and if you have "only" had your house burgled you will be lucky if you see a Crime Scene Investigator before half the following day has passed.

Officers admit that calling them on their mobile numbers is the most reliable way to communicate. They admit they have not got enough radio batteries to cover their shifts. They avoid confronting anti-social drinkers in Acton Town Centre, The Oaks Shopping Centre and other places in the neighbourhood because they feel as though they have other less time-consuming things to do. (They appoint an outreach worker instead).

If you have a scooter stolen, you are questioned why you had bought one as they are always getting pinched - it's obviously your fault that you had the audacity to own a motorbike. Public assistance seems to be shunned or mistrusted - advice that would help to make an arrest is ignored or misunderstood. CCTV cameras, introduced to cover crime hot-spots, target the wrong area or are of poor quality ... I could go on, but instead let me share with you the contents of an e-mail I received recently:

"" When I spoke to [the victims] at 5:00pm the police had not called back. The woman was crying and very upset and shaken. They asked me to contact the police to find out what was happening. They had been given a reference number but not a crime number.

I rang Ealing Police Station at around 5:30pm. I was told that the incident had been SIGNED OFF. I told the person at the other end of the phone that the couple were still waiting for someone to call and that we had detailed descriptions of the men and a van number. She apologised that no one had followed it up. I gave her the number of the van; she looked it up and immediately responded THESE PEOPLE ARE KNOWN TO THE POLICE. She said that she would try and get someone round. NO ONE CAME.

Today at around 3:00pm three men were knocking at doors in [my road]. They appeared to target houses that looked unoccupied. They saw me go into my house and stopped at the house before. They missed out the neighbours that had been conned yesterday. I rang my neighbour to confirm yesterdays descriptions and to find out if the police had been round yet they hadn't. I rang Ealing Police Station and informed them that three men who had the same description were in the area knocking on doors. (There was now another sitting in a different white van; the van did not have a back number plate). I was told by the person at the other end of the phone that she would try and send someone round. NO ONE CAME.

HOW CAN WE GET A RESPONSE FROM THE POLICE? WHY WAS THE INCIDENT SIGNED OFF WITHOUT THE POLICE EVEN CONTACTING THE VICTIMS? In the meantime the couple are still waiting for someone to contact them and I am very concerned that the men will return again. ""

Let me make something very clear - my recent disappointment is not so great that it has clouded my eyes to my other view. This other view is simple - that local and national government have made the job far more difficult.

We all see the creeping impact of so-called human rights legislation, whereby the perpetrator of the crime seems to have more rights in law than their victims. The police have boxes to tick, quotas to meet, forms to fill out - all

so that the Home Office can try to compare this year's social project's progress with last year's. Councils fail to back up police initiatives with action - slow responses to graffiti, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour. Nationally, there are insufficient funds to recruit and retain real police officers but plenty of funds for PCSOs with shiny uniforms but no powers of arrest. Perhaps most cynically of all, Ealing Council's desire to cover its' financial deficit has led it to use CCTV cameras to raise bus-lane fine revenues, instead of to deter and solve crime.

While we don't profess to own a magic wand, Conservatives have set out our plans in this area.
We have recently committed ourselves to legislation that will make it far more difficult for a house-breaker to sue the property owners they violated for injuries sustained
We similarly committed to introducing legislation that allows property owners confidently to defend their property, free from the worry of what level of force is deemed appropriate
We will not enforce the latest Government idea that police officers must fill in a form every time they stop someone (not stop AND SEARCH someone, just stop them - this is Labour's latest good idea)
We will bring to an end the prison early-release scheme
We will build more prisons
We will begin to recruit 5,000 more police officers every year and try to restore the leadership and morale that has disappeared in so many Boroughs
Personally I would like to see us commit to providing sufficient resources that we enable a police station to be opened and manned in every ward of every Borough in London. I have not yet got Michael Howard's commitment to this, but I am trying!

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Let me move on to cheerier subjects.

Last weekend, we held a seminar entitled "So you want to be a Councillor?" at our Office in Acton. The room was packed - around 25 potential new candidates, with the possibility of as many again responding to our newspaper adverts that you may have seen in some of the local newspapers. If any readers of this newsletter would like to know more about the process, please let me know.

Don't forget that Ken Livingstone will be holding People's Question Time on 11th November at Acton Assembly Hall - go here for more details <http://www.london.gov.uk/>

We would like to invite you to join us for supper on Tuesday 23rd November, when our guest speaker will be The Times' Weekend Editor and newly-selected Parliamentary candidate for Surrey Heath, Michael Gove.

For those of you with business interests, you may wish to know more about a business forum that has been established by a number of West London Conservative Associations. Known as "Business and Politics" it allows businessmen and politicians to share ideas and thoughts on topical issues. Let me know if you would like to hear more - our next meeting is on Tuesday the 9th November.

Finally I invite you to submit your answers to our online surveys on www.ealingconservatives.com The survey this month is on smoking, and whether it ought to be banned in certain public places. Let me know your thoughts - next month I will tell you the results.

Have an enjoyable month.

Best wishes,
Jonathan