

Mayor of London's plans attack the principle of 'policing with consent'.

The principle of 'policing by consent', developed in the 19th century by the founder of modern policing, Sir Robert Peel, forms the basis of modern British policing. The notion that police officers are citizens in uniform remains the foundation of professional policing. They exercise their powers to police their fellow citizens with the implicit consent of their fellow citizens.

This important principle is now under extreme threat as a result of the decision in 2013 by the [Mayor of London Boris Johnson](#) to reshape police-community consultation arrangements for London. His proposals will see local consultative groups replaced by new [Safer Neighbourhood Boards](#) that will, in our opinion, further erode police accountability in London.

Lord Scarman and the Brixton disturbances of 1981

The [Lambeth Community Police Consultative Group](#) was founded in the aftermath of the 1981 civil disturbances that took place in Brixton. In April of that year a massive policing operation named [Operation Swamp 81](#) saw thousands of police officers deployed onto the streets of central Brixton

The stated objective of the police was to tackle street robbery; however, as was recorded at the time, the relationship between the [Metropolitan Police Service](#) and, in particular, the local black community was hostile and antagonistic and policing was discriminatory. For example, plain clothes police officers were dispatched to Brixton and in five days almost 1,000 people were stopped and searched

Racism in policing remained largely unacknowledged, complaints of police racism and brutality were routinely dismissed as isolated incidents, not at all reflective of the service as a whole. The reality was that racism within policing was endemic and institutional, resulting in a massively disproportionate use of policing powers, such as the discredited [Stopped Under Suspicion](#) (SUS) law.

The [Scarman Report](#) into the causes of the 1981 disturbances found that an important contributory factor was the breakdown in communication between the police and the community. Scarman identified this as a central cause of the dangerous information vacuum that heightened the potential for serious disorder. This, combined with unrestrained police racism, prevented the development of constructive relationships and the building of genuine police accountability.

The lessons of Lord Scarman are clear; lack of trust and confidence, the breakdown of effective communications, lack of experienced officers and a high numbers of young

trainee probationers, represent a toxic combination of issues that left unacknowledged lead to increased levels police community conflict.

Setting national standards in policing

Lambeth CPCG has been at the forefront of reforming police policy and practice for the last 30 years. Monthly meetings throughout the borough are open to the public, who can come and discuss their concerns about policing in the borough with the Borough Commander and his senior management team. Over the years we have pioneered cutting edge work on tackling domestic violence and rape, establishing independent custody visitors and highlighting the issue of mental health and deaths in police custody and created London's first stop and search monitoring group.

This is a brief summary of some of the critically important work we do. All our members are volunteers, our board members are elected annually from the membership and all our meetings are minuted and available to the public.

Our members have been critical in preventing potential disorder and in positively resolving critical policing community incidents in Lambeth for the last 30 years, often working unacknowledged late into the night (ICVs are on call 24 hours a day).

The Mayor has now directed the MPS to stop consulting with all CPCGs across London.

Mayors Plans: A Disaster for London

As a long-standing organisation with a proven track record and an unrivalled experience in working on community-police relations we believe that the Mayor's proposals are a disaster for Lambeth and, more widely, London and the UK in general.

The new Lambeth SNB will not be directly accountable or transparent to the people of Lambeth. These ill thought out proposals must be radically amended to be credible.

We oppose the Mayor's plans as currently proposed. CPCG set out in detail the arrangements that would build on our extensive experience and make sense in a sensitive, high crime, multicultural borough like Lambeth.

The response of our new Borough Commander, Richard Wood, and Labour Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Cllr Jack Hopkins, who lead the consultation process locally has been to dismiss outright what we believe to be fundamental to any effective police-community engagement proposals.

We ask that you join us in ensuring the principle of policing by consent remains sacrosanct and that there is no repeat of the disturbances that for so long came to define Brixton.

Have Your Shout!

You can do your bit to protect policing by consent in Lambeth by some or all of the following- it needn't take long:

1. Answer [CPCG's on-line survey](#) (just 4 questions in total)
2. Add your name to our [petition](#).
3. Make your own response to Lambeth Council's consultation (note the deadline is now 16th May). We'd be grateful if you were able to mail a copy of your response to admin@lambethcpcg.org.uk or to our postal address below.
4. Keep the evening of **Tuesday, 3 June** free, when we shall be having a public meeting to check how this is developing.

For more Information visit our [Safer Neighbourhood Board webpage](#) and follow us on Twitter.

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