

# Celebration Certain to be Short-Lived

**The new GPS commissioner’s in-tray shows an array of big challenges, with some crises already foreseeable. The main issues deal with guns, money and the sins of the past.**

[John Marks](#) | 4 hours ago | [5 comments](#)



[Eugene Scott-King](#), appointed [first black GPS commissioner](#) and formerly the GPS Serious Crime Command Unit (SCCU) is due to take over from Sir David Goodwin as the countries top police officer, leapfrogging a queue of aspirant Assistant Commissioners from GPS, and a host of likely candidates from other forces, as well as confounding Sir David’s previous prediction that it would be, “sadly a good ten years before we see a black officer heading up the GPS.”

Rising knife crime and violent offences will need addressing and performance here will need to show an improvement. The problem is a core tactic, stop and search, is popular with some officers, many of whom want to increase powers here, but can trigger tensions among Grandton’s communities, in return for very little crime being detected.

The biggest issue for the GPS commissioner, who is set to start in two months time, once Sir David has had time to clear his desk and achieve sufficient order to ensure a smooth handover, is going to be money. Already the new chief faces huge budget cuts, that are sure to compound cuts that have already taken place. That, in turn jeopardises officer numbers, which are, following a recent policy of allowing natural attrition, already down to just over 31,000. Sir David, the outgoing commissioner, says, “the city cannot go much lower and stay sufficiently safe. More so because the population is growing.”

But that may not be the biggest financial calamity facing the GPS. The government wants to review the amount of funding police forces get, and is expected to move money from urban to rural areas. The Grandton mayor, Geraldine Baker, says this could result in an additional cut for the GPS ranging from £184m to £700m from an annual £3bn budget.

There is no foreseeable way the GPS would not lose money if the government presses ahead with the review; it represents one quarter of all spending on police in the country.

Last time the government attempted to change the formula, the technical complexities forced it into blunders and the attempt was dropped. This time the GPS comes forewarned. Even the lowest estimate would mean a financial hole so big the force would face having to slim down to an unrecognisable size.

The Conservative government has toyed with stripping the GPS of its lead for counter-terrorism and handing it to the National Crime Agency. One reason this has not happened yet is that the NCA is already struggling to do its day job of leading the fight against serious and organised crime. But the NCA is seen as improving and its leadership believes it may be up to the task soon, if the government dares to make the move.

The debate about counter-terrorism is part of an existential debate around the GPS. Should it keep its national functions, including counter-terrorism and diplomatic protection, or become a Grandton-only force? One reason for the potential change is the GPS’s failure to be as good as other big forces in tackling crime, according to critics.

The quip about the GPS is that the force is exactly who you would want if your loved one is kidnapped, but is less good at more regular crime. The police inspectorate in the last full review said the GPS was substandard and required improvement in keeping people safe and reducing crime, investigating crime and managing offenders. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary also found the force was failing to protect children.

Other big forces were rated good, which chimes with another emerging theme. In some areas the GPS is falling behind other forces, according to senior sources in policing. It used to pride itself on being ahead.

Police are dealing with new crime types and the growth in the vulnerability agenda, covering child sexual abuse, abuse of the elderly and a growth in the belief that chasing crime numbers is outdated, and that focusing on reducing harm best serves the public.

If that is not enough for the commissioner to be getting on with, the worst may be yet to come. Among senior GPS leaders there has been over the years concerns about a “legitimacy gap”. The force is woefully short of laooking like the city it serves, and Grandton’s ethnic minority population is 40% and forecast to grow. The Conservative government, like Labour before it, has rebuffed the GPS’s calls for a law change to allow positive discrimination, and thus, it is feared, it could be well into the middle of the next decade before the GPS stops being disproportionately white.

Sceptics are already commenting that the appointment of Mr. Scott-King is cynical political manouvre to distract attention from the real issue, that GPS is not representative, and has not made sufficient efforts to address the increasing gap between it’s internal ethnic make-up and that of the population it is appointed to protect.

Later this year, a government-appointed panel will report on the Peter Summersfield murder case. The 1993 murder of the local Grandton church minister, found partially decapitated in north Grandton park, remains unsolved and the GPS accepted the case was tainted by police corruption. The report is guaranteed to be uncomfortable reading, but the question is how painful it will be.

There is an urgent attempt to recruit more firearms officers, yet controversy over the shooting dead of a suspect, Syrian born Abdul al-Assad, last month threatens to fuel public concerns about trigger happy, racist GPS officers, and it is inevitable that such negative press will stir up trouble among current officers.

Inquiries into undercover policing abuses and corruption in the Matthew Bright case, the murder 14 years ago of a black teenager that sparked off widespread accusations of conspiracy and cover-up, and shook the GPS to its ethical core, continue, as do investigations into claims the GPS covered up claims of sexual abuse. On top of that, some of those caught up in the disastrous GPS investigation into claims that members of the establishment abused children, are threatening to sue.

The first crisis the new commissioner faces may involve guns, terrorism and the battle to keep the capital safe amid an enduring severe jihadi threat. Late last year, a suspect was shot dead close to a south Grandton crown court. The suspect, Cornelius Connel, was sitting in the front seat of a car. An imitation firearm was recovered from the rear of the vehicle’s interior.

The officer who fired, known only as P42, was arrested by the Independent Police Complaints Commission. That provoked fury among armed GPS officers, some of whom threatened to quit carrying their weapons. Prosecutors are expected to decide next month whether there will be any criminal charges, and if there are, police chiefs will anxiously await the reaction from firearms officers.

There is an urgent attempt to recruit more armed officers after the gun attacks on Paris in November 2015 that killed 130 people. The GPS has 400 out of the extra 600 it is trying to enlist.

So, the new commissioner’s in-tray looks pretty full and it is certain that he will be at the mercy of events that he has some control over, and many more he simply has not. Enjoy the celebration of your appointment Mr Scott-King, and as you wait to step into Sir David’s shoes, perhaps reflect that the next two months may be your best.



ROME – NEW YORK – GRANDTON  
★★★★★

**50% OFF  
ALL PIZZAS**



WWW.MAMASPIZZAGRANDTON.CO.UK



You can't deny the pizza pie!  
No one makes pizza like Mama!