



**Strategic Policing and Crime Board**

**Date of meeting 20/10/2020**

**Police and Crime Plan Priority:** *Protecting from Harm*

**Title:** *Operation MOORING Update*

**Presented by:** *CC Dave Thompson*

**Purpose of Paper**

1. To update the Strategic Policing & Crime Board (SPCB) on the progress of Operation MOORING - the West Midlands Police response to, and investigation of, a series of eight knife attacks in Birmingham City Centre during the early hours of Sunday, 6 September 2020.
2. This paper offers an update to the verbal briefing provided by Chief Constable Thompson to SCPB on 15 September 2020. It provides updates on the condition of the victims, the criminal investigation, recommendations from the Initial Debrief and the commissioning of the Formal Debrief.
3. This report is for information only.

**Condition of the Victims**

4. Tragically, Jacob Billington lost his life as a result of the injuries he suffered during the attacks. His funeral service was held at St Peter's & St Paul's Church, Liverpool on 23 September 2020.
5. The remaining victims survived and the attacks have resulted in varying degrees of injury and long term impact.
6. One victim, who was attacked at the same time as his friend Jacob Billington, is the only victim who remains in hospital. He has been transferred to a hospital in Liverpool, which is his home-town and where his parents reside. He is on a rehabilitation ward at a specialist neurological hospital. He is expected to be there for a number of months whilst they work towards maximising his capabilities.
7. There is no change in the status of the other victims all of whom have physically recovered or are physically recovering well.

## **Criminal Investigation**

8. A suspect, Zephaniah McLeod from Birmingham, was arrested in the early hours of Monday, 7 September 2020 and later charged with one count of murder and seven counts of attempted murder.
9. McLeod is currently remanded in prison. His Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH) was due to take place on 12 October 2020 but, due to CoVID-19 restrictions, has been rescheduled until 12 November 2020.
10. A provisional trial date remains set for 22 February 2021.

## **Initial Debrief**

11. An internal Initial Debrief was conducted shortly after the events of Operation MOORING.
12. The Initial Debrief was conducted by the Head of Operations, with support from the Operations Resilience Unit and the Homicide Review Team. It captured comments from 15 police officers and staff directly involved in the operation.
13. Overall, the Initial Debrief concluded that police officers and staff, at all levels, responded appropriately and professionally to save lives, secure evidence and apprehend the offender. All departments came together to provide a 'whole force' response with staff clear about their roles and what was expected of them.
14. The Initial Debrief identified 25 areas of good practice. These included the rapid deployment of significant armed and unarmed officers into the city centre from across the force; immediate offers of support of additional armed response vehicles from regional forces; proactive real-time intelligence throughout the incident; information sharing with partner agencies; effective working between Force CID and Counter Terrorism Policing at a time when the motivation for the attacks was unknown; and post-incident welfare support for staff.
15. The Initial Debrief also identified areas for improvement and made five immediate recommendations which are currently being addressed:
16. ***Area of Improvement 1 – Command Resilience***

**Issue:** West Midlands Police's day-to-day force tactical command is delivered by a Mission Support Superintendent supported by a robust system of 24/7 cadres of on-call specialist senior officers including Firearms Superintendents, Major Crime Superintendents, Counter-Terrorism Superintendents and Authorities Superintendents. However, there is no 24/7 on-call cadre for a Major Incident Superintendent (Silver Commander) - this responsibility is usually undertaken by either the Mission Support Superintendent or a Local Policing Superintendent.

During the morning of Sunday, 6 September the Local Policing Chief Superintendent undertook the role of both Major Incident (Silver) commander and

police media spokesperson. Given the significant operational and media requirements it would have been preferential to split these responsibilities between two different senior leaders. By Sunday afternoon this dual role had been split.

**Recommendation:** During the early stages of a major incident one of the existing on-call Superintendents should be utilised to provide additional resilience as the initial Major Incident (Silver) Commander.

**Update:** As an interim measure the on-call Authorities Superintendent will be contacted to support any future major incident activation. This provides 24/7 coverage in addition to the Mission Support Superintendents. Further consultation, led by the Head of Operations, is being planned to consider whether this is a sustainable long term solution.

17. ***Area for Improvement 2 – Gold Control Activation***

**Issue:** During late morning on Sunday, 6 September, and once the initial response to the attacks had concluded, a decision was made to activate Gold Control to support the Duty Assistant Chief Constable in planning the force's longer term response. The arrangements for this Gold Control activation were not fully understood by all staff and its implementation was delayed. This delay did not affect the management of the incident on the night.

**Recommendation:** Brief all Force Incident Managers, Force Support Unit Inspectors and Force Control Room staff on the Gold Control activation plan.

**Update:** This recommendation has now been extended to include Mission Support staff. The intention is to deliver personal briefings to relevant staff (rather than disseminating the written plan which is already accessible). Due to on-going senior officer promotion and posting processes, it is anticipated that these face-to-face briefings will be completed by the end of December 2020.

18. ***Area for Improvement 3 – Declaration of Major Incident & Operation PLATO***

**Issue:** West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) declared a major incident first. However, West Midlands Police were in receipt of sufficient information to have identified and declared this sooner. West Midlands Police deliberately did not declare the incident as Operation PLATO i.e. a marauding terrorist attack (MTA). This allowed ambulances to attend the scene quickly and provide urgent medical aid. Had Operation PLATO been declared it is possible that medical aid may have been delayed and there may have been further loss of life.

**Recommendation:** Work with WMAS to fully understand the implications of declaring Operation PLATO and seek to identify opportunities to improve the overall response.

**Update:** WMAS have been fully consulted. The issues raised have been elevated to a national level for wider consultation and will form a significant part of the Formal Debrief.

19. **Area for Improvement 4 – Firearms Command**

**Issue:** Spontaneous incidents requiring an armed response are initially commanded by the Force Control Room (FCR) Inspector and/or Force Incident Manager (FIM). If the incident is not resolved quickly or becomes complex command transfers to an on-call Firearms Superintendent supported by an on-call Firearms Tactical Advisor. Given the scale of the armed response on the night consideration could have been given to contacting the on-call Firearms Superintendent and Tactical Advisor at an earlier stage. This would not have changed the armed response but would have provided greater resilience for the FCR Inspector and Force Incident Manager.

**Recommendation:** Conduct continuous professional development with Force Incident Managers and Force Control Room Inspectors to support their decision-making around the transfer of command from a spontaneous firearms commander to a cadre firearms commander.

**Update:** All firearms commanders have received an email briefing note and this learning has been added to the mandatory firearms commander continuous professional development training currently planned between January and March 2021.

20. **Area for Improvement 5 – Protective Security Plan**

**Issue:** During the evening of Sunday, 6 September, and before the suspect was arrested, it was necessary to put in place police patrols in Birmingham City Centre to protect visitors to the night-time economy from further attacks. Protective security patrols (when compared to crime hotspot patrols or reassurance patrols) are a rarely used and little understood police tactic. As a consequence, the initial patrol plans required continual refinement and enhancement throughout the course of the evening.

**Recommendation:** Generate a 'protective security plan' guidance document to aid future and speedier implementation.

**Update:** Head of Operations is working with the Local Resilience Forum, Operations Planning, Counter-Terrorism Security Advisors and Local Policing to review and refresh existing plans. Further updates are expected in November.

21. Finally, the Initial Debrief recognised the concerns many officers and staff felt about the negative press coverage of the police response, especially because the needs of the criminal investigation and Coronial inquiry had prevented all of the relevant information being placed in the public domain. Chief Constable Thompson addressed these issues in his statements of 8 and 15 September.

**Formal Debrief**

22. In addition to the internal Initial Debrief, West Midlands Police has also commissioned an independent Formal Debrief of Operation MOORING.

23. The Formal Debrief will be conducted by the National Counter Terrorism Policing Organisational Development Unit (NCTP ODU)
24. Although the attacks were not terrorism related, the NCTP ODU was commissioned to conduct the Formal Debrief due to their expertise in conducting previous debriefs of both major incidents and marauding attacks.
25. The purpose of the Formal Debrief is to identify good practice and areas for organisational learning and joint organisational learning through reflection, sharing experiences, gathering information and developing ideas for the future.
26. Debriefing in this context does not equate to an inspection or review. It is not designed to test tactics and processes against set standards but rather is aimed at identifying strengths and weaknesses of the response in order to make recommendations for enhancing future responses.
27. The Formal Debrief will focus on 11 areas:
  - ***Initial response***
  - ***Command, control & communications***
  - ***Application of Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)***
  - ***Information & intelligence***
  - ***Criminal investigation***
  - ***Support to victims & their families***
  - ***Use of media & social media***
  - ***Protective security within Birmingham City Centre***
  - ***Consequence management & community reassurance***
  - ***Officer & staff welfare***
  - ***Liaison with National Counter Terrorism Policing***
28. The Formal Debrief is being conducted in accordance with the College of Policing's *structured debriefing* methodology. It is taking the form of two debriefing workshops, individual interviews and written questionnaires.
29. The first debriefing workshop took place on 13 October 2020. The workshop focused on the operational response and was attended by 26 individuals from 18 different roles, departments or agencies. Topics discussed included resourcing, declaration of Operation PLATO, declaration of major incident, release of CCTV imagery, notifications to victims' families, protective security measures and staff welfare.
30. The second structured debriefing workshop is planned for 4 November 2020 and will focus on the investigative response.

31. Debrief questionnaires have been distributed to those unable to attend a workshop, as well as wider partners and stakeholders.
32. Finally, one-to-one interviews are being conducted with individual senior leaders.
33. The Formal Debrief report and recommendations are expected to be completed by 31 December 2020.

#### **Next Steps**

34. The Board is asked to note the contents of this report. A further report will be provided once the Formal Debrief has been completed.

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