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Office of the
**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
West Yorkshire

My Reference: OPCC/MBW/JED

Your Reference:

14 October 2013

The Rt. Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DP

Dear Home Secretary

I am writing to call on you to review the current legislation surrounding 'assemblies' and 'rallies' in order to consider providing Chief Constables in consultation with key local stakeholders, the enhanced powers to take informed decisions on whether to ban events such as that held by the English Defence League (EDL) in Bradford over the weekend.

The community impact of such a damaging and disruptive demonstration and the costs incurred to our communities at a time of severe cuts to public services makes the current legislative arrangements in my view hugely questionable.

The anticipated cost of policing this 'demonstration' alone is approximately £1 million, and that does not take into account the weeks of preparation and planning or the pre and post investigations costs. There are also significant associated extra costs for the local council and other public services, let alone the losses to our local businesses as people understandably stayed out of the city centre on a what should be a prime shopping day.

It seems to me to be wholly wrong that the people of Bradford and tax-payers across West Yorkshire should carry the burden of the impact and costs for such events which are generally imposed upon them, and are designed to bring division and fear to our communities as well as attract groups with opposing views that only adds to community tensions. This makes policing more problematic across the country as the requirement for such mutual aid grows in the face of reducing overall capacity and capability. It is to the huge credit of Bradfordians from all communities and different organisations and faiths working together with the police and council that no serious disorder took place.

Continued...

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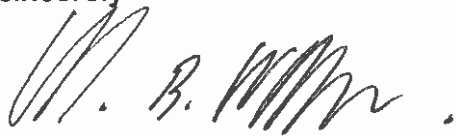
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I will be submitting a Special Grant application in respect of this demonstration as the budget reductions (approx £140m from 2010 to 2016) to policing will affect West Yorkshire disproportionately hard, securing this funding will help assist me and the Chief Constable in making sure reduced budgets are spent meeting the policing and community safety priorities for our communities across the county.

However, a review of the law to potentially extend current powers to prevent these types of 'assemblies' and 'rallies' that are targeted at specific communities and intended to cause division and disruption would be a better long term solution that takes into account local factors and circumstances after consultation. The disproportionate cost to our communities, public services and businesses that these type of EDL events are imposing in West Yorkshire and around the country surely now outweighs and questions the abuse of the individual right to demonstrate?

Yours sincerely



Mark Burns-Williamson
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire