

OPUS2

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Day 130

July 8, 2021

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Thursday, 8 July 2021

1
2 (9.30 am)
3 MR PAUL ETCHES (continued)
4 MR DE LA POER: Can I invite Mr Smith, please, on behalf of
5 North West Fire Control.
6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr Smith.
7 Questions from MR SMITH
8 MR SMITH: Could I ask Mr Lopez to put on the screen,
9 please, {INQ041473/53}.
10 That shows, using the MODAS system, that your
11 attendance at the command support room was at 23.36.57.
12 Are you familiar with the way that system works?
13 A. I'm aware of it, sir, but not really familiar with how
14 it works.
15 Q. Does it link to a GPS system in your vehicle?
16 A. I believe it links to or is linked to the Airwave radio
17 GPS rather than within the vehicle.
18 Q. So that's sitting in your vehicle or with you?
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. So that's how the link is created?
21 A. That's right.
22 Q. Just what I would like to take you to, for the purposes
23 of clarification, is {INQ041473/65} next, please. We
24 see on the sequence of communications that timed at
25 00.01, Area Manager Etches' arrival at the command

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1 support room, and {INQ004290/1} is incident log 903.
2 So that time was clearly entered on the incident log
3 as we can see in the following sections.
4 A. Yes, sir.
5 Q. And I anticipate somebody might have wanted to know in
6 due course why there were two references at that
7 distance apart for your arrival at the command support
8 room, and all I'm seeking to do is to clarify that
9 issue.
10 A. Yes, I can certainly try, sir.
11 Q. I can tell you that your code, GA014, automatically
12 generated a reference on the incident log at that time
13 in terms of in attendance, using the code IA. Is the
14 position, Mr Etches, that you would have arrived at the
15 time broadly indicated on the MODAS system, you would
16 then have been engaged in setting up the command support
17 room, and at some stage the system will have generated
18 your presence automatically on the incident log?
19 A. Sir, I think the sequence of events that you've just
20 referred to there are the timing around 36 from the
21 MODAS arrival at the gates at Fire Service Headquarters.
22 I'm pretty sure I have seen somewhere within the
23 evidence pack a timing of 41, where I've swiped into the
24 room, and I think this -- the latter one is more than
25 likely my error in a delay in physically booking an

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1 attendance.
2 Q. So once you physically book an attendance, that will be
3 picked up by the system and that would explain why the
4 incident log will read for that time:
5 "00.01: GA014 in attendance"?
6 A. Yes, sir.
7 MR SMITH: Thank you very much. That's all I ask you.
8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr Smith.
9 MR DE LA POER: Can I then turn next to Mr Cooper QC.
10 Questions from MR COOPER
11 MR COOPER: Mr Etches, as you know, I ask questions on
12 behalf of the bereaved families today on these matters.
13 Can I first take you to your statement just for some
14 clarification. Paragraph 14, please, Mr Lopez,
15 {INQ026720/3}, just to get some clarification on this.
16 You were working closely on the prevention agenda,
17 weren't you, for GMFRS nationally?
18 A. Yes, sir.
19 Q. And in terms of that initiative, did it in any way
20 encompass attitudes or approaches to the terrorist
21 threat?
22 A. It did through the Protect strategy and some of the
23 training where we had members of staff who were involved
24 in a strategy from an outreach perspective.
25 Q. And again, very shortly, because I think the chair will

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1 have a significant amount of information on this anyway,
2 but you were centrally placed. When you say outreach,
3 as far as your work is concerned on the prevention
4 agenda for GMFRS, what sort of outreach did GMFRS have
5 in relation to combating terrorism under the prevention
6 strategy?
7 A. I think within a couple of paragraphs later, where
8 I discuss the WRAP training, which is the workshops to
9 raise --
10 Q. Paragraph 16 {INQ026720/4}, if it helps you. Let's go
11 on to that please, Mr Lopez.
12 A. So it was before a time that I picked up the role as
13 head of prevention, but there was already roles within
14 place where we had people in the team that had had
15 training to hold and host those workshops along with
16 other partners across Greater Manchester around
17 communities and business, around raising the awareness
18 of Prevent as a strategy.
19 Q. Was that, as far as you're aware, particularly used in
20 Manchester?
21 A. Yes, sir. I couldn't give figures, but certainly those
22 workshops were frequent advertised for attendance.
23 There was encouragement from GMP and other partners
24 for -- quite a large part of what I saw was around
25 businesses attending to raise awareness around the

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1 Prevent strategy.
 2 Q. In the last sentence in paragraph 16, finally on this
 3 issue, you say:
 4 "Since April 2019, this department is now part of
 5 the training centre and it has a greater internal focus
 6 upon staff and apprentice training."
 7 Again in relation to combating terrorism, and
 8 I pause for a moment: if anything I ask you is sensitive
 9 you must say so immediately.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, I'm not aware of anything
 11 sensitive. This is guidance at present to everybody and
 12 obviously submissions can be made to me. As you will
 13 know, the Prevent strategy generally is controversial
 14 and there is a -- it is being looked at at the moment,
 15 an inquiry into it, or a review of it. I don't want in
 16 any way to cut across that, nor do I want to get into
 17 any controversy as to whether Prevent is the right thing
 18 to have, the Prevent strategy -- I'm sure you understand
 19 for good reason.
 20 I will be investigating whether, bearing in mind it
 21 was government policy at the time, sufficient use was
 22 made of it by enforcement agencies, but I just want to
 23 make sure that we have those parameters. I'm not
 24 interested in hearing about whether it's a good idea,
 25 whether it worked or anything like that. I hope you

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1 don't mind me addressing you about that, it's really
 2 addressed to everybody. I will hear what CPs have to
 3 say about that if they wish to make submissions to me
 4 about it.
 5 MR COOPER: As you'll anticipate, a particular section of
 6 those I represent have an acute interest in this area
 7 which is why I raised.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Absolutely, an acute interest in whether
 9 it should have been used and wasn't, and I well
 10 understand that, but I just want to keep away from any
 11 evaluation of it as to whether it was a good idea, a bad
 12 idea, whether it works and things like that.
 13 MR COOPER: I understand. Well, given that indication,
 14 which I of course totally understand, let me move on to
 15 another matter.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm open to submissions if people think
 17 that I'm restricting the terms too greatly. Please
 18 understand I'm not in any way -- and we will be looking
 19 into whether referrals to Prevent should have been made
 20 in certain cases. I'm certainly not stopping that
 21 because it was government policy at the time.
 22 MR COOPER: I understand. Perhaps I can just finish then on
 23 one question, if it assists you, sir, simply on that
 24 question in relation, please, Mr Etches, to
 25 paragraph 16, that last sentence:

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1 "Since April 2019, this department is now part of
 2 the training centre and it has a great internal focus
 3 upon staff and apprentice training."
 4 Does that mean that there are developments still
 5 going on since April 2019 in relation to the terrorist
 6 element of WRAP?
 7 A. I think, sir, if I think back on dates, there was
 8 a change in line management of the teams that held that
 9 within the prevention team, those roles were transferred
 10 across within the training and development area, and
 11 a -- not a lot, but some of the people that previously
 12 delivered that training were then sort of realigned,
 13 focused to deal with other emerging priorities within
 14 the service, if you like, and one of them was large
 15 scale recruitment and apprenticeships.
 16 The point of that statement is there was potentially
 17 less activity being carried out by those people that
 18 held those workshops because they were diverted into
 19 other areas of work.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So less outreach?
 21 A. Sir.
 22 MR COOPER: I'll leave it there.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much.
 24 MR COOPER: Can I ask you now some questions about
 25 Winchester Accord. You were, if I can ask you a global

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1 question before we go just to a bit of particularity,
 2 you were frustrated, weren't you, somewhat, about
 3 Winchester Accord and what it revealed?
 4 A. Yes, sir.
 5 Q. Let me take you firstly to your paragraphs 28 and 29 of
 6 the same statement {INQ026720/6}. You say:
 7 "The experiences from Winchester Accord were
 8 a breakdown in communications and a lack of clarity of
 9 activity on the incident ground."
 10 And this has been touched on and it won't assist the
 11 chair if I simply repeat what's there to be read.
 12 Is it right to say that paragraphs 28 and 29
 13 encapsulate your concerns about Winchester Accord?
 14 A. Yes. I think in the first paragraph referred to there,
 15 frustration around how the exercise was meant to have
 16 played out and didn't and the frustrations that myself
 17 and crews -- a lot of planning, a lot of energy goes
 18 into the exercising. So when they don't work and you
 19 don't get the output from that, it's really frustrating.
 20 The second point I make there is that observation
 21 around -- and I think I make it a few times in the
 22 statement, around the competing roles in that type of
 23 scenario. It was mentioned yesterday when I was asked
 24 around my experience from the airport and I think I'm
 25 starting to think now around the principles of what we

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1 anticipate to happen potentially are not going to play
 2 out because of conflicting priorities .
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm just interested in some fairly
 4 precise questions and answers if you don't mind about
 5 Winchester Accord. You were in the Silver command room
 6 at the time observing what went on?
 7 A. Sir.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The way the operation in general terms
 9 was meant to happen is that there was a hot zone?
 10 A. Yes, sir .
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There were gunmen?
 12 A. Yes, sir .
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: They had to be cleared out?
 14 A. Sir .
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: By GMP and maybe the military?
 16 A. Sir .
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And at the time they had been cleared
 18 out, that would then become a warm zone?
 19 A. Sir .
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And GMFRS and NWS could then move in to
 21 deal with the casualties?
 22 A. That's correct, sir .
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is your evidence, and I want you to
 24 think carefully about this, that the warm zone existed
 25 for some time before you were actually called — before

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1 GMFRS were called forward?
 2 A. In theory, I think, sir , that would have been correct.
 3 I make that assumption from —
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm rather more interested in practice
 5 than theory (overspeaking).
 6 A. I guess ... You know, that environment, as you just
 7 described there, where it's a hot zone and firearms
 8 officers are moving through, then behind becomes warm
 9 and that space... As far as the calling forward bit,
 10 and I guess that's where I'm not clear on that
 11 communications breakdown... My experience of exercising
 12 in that space was in close contact with firearms
 13 officers , so you could see in an exercise scenario the
 14 space that we were to be moving into.
 15 I don't know in this case whether that co-location
 16 was created before GMP officers moved forward to
 17 neutralise the threat. The exercising that I've
 18 experienced has always been around being in a similar
 19 location to be able to identify the warm zone.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. So as I understood it, you
 21 wouldn't go into a hot zone, would you?
 22 A. No, sir .
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But you would be at some sort of forward
 24 control point or something like that, ready to move in
 25 as soon as you're told, "That area's now a warm zone,

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1 where there are casualties , you may now go in"?
 2 A. Absolutely, sir .
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did that happen as far as you're
 4 concerned on Winchester Accord?
 5 A. No. My understanding on Winchester Accord is that the
 6 fire and ambulance crews weren't at a forward control
 7 point at the time when firearms officers moved forward.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So they hadn't been moved from the RVP
 9 to the forward control point?
 10 A. Yes, sir .
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The exercise as far as you're
 12 concerned — well, it did, it started at the RVP point?
 13 A. Yes, sir .
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We didn't have the calling people
 15 forward. So all of the RVP point mustered, the next
 16 thing to happen is going to the forward control point,
 17 so as soon as it is declared the area's warm you can
 18 move forward?
 19 A. Yes, sir .
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What you're saying is there was no —
 21 you weren't called forward from the RVP point to the
 22 FCP, the forward control point?
 23 A. Yes, sir .
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. Now I understand that.
 25 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.

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1 Still on the subject of Winchester, can I take you,
 2 please, to a statement of Mr Meakin who actually refers
 3 to you in it and I want to see whether you agree with
 4 his observations of you. {INQ026731/1}, please. It's
 5 just a paragraph in Mr Meakin's statement that I would
 6 like to bring to your attention. Paragraph 39:
 7 "I was fairly new to the NILO role at the time of
 8 Winchester Accord but I could see that Paul Etches was
 9 frustrated by the lack of progress with the incident
 10 during the exercise. It was a great opportunity to test
 11 a full deployment in a realistic environment but the
 12 opportunity was missed."
 13 I just wanted to clarify that. It's a little vague
 14 from Mr Meakin and he speaks of you, that you were
 15 frustrated by the lack of progress with the incident.
 16 What were you frustrated with, so much so that Mr Meakin
 17 could see that?
 18 A. Yes, sir, I think, likewise, as sort of the chair just
 19 played out there around the situation of not being
 20 called forward, I think the frustration around it again
 21 is the energy from the service to go into that exercise,
 22 that planning — I can't remember, but I think both
 23 myself and Mr Meakin were off duty, we had come in so
 24 there was enough resilience in the rota to be able to
 25 maintain effective cover. It was about just the lack of

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1 opportunity to be able to exercise. Crews from stations
 2 were there late into the night. There was a lot of
 3 planning and a lot of energy for wanting to test
 4 something that a great deal of training and investment
 5 had gone into previously.
 6 Q. Why do you think that was, in a nutshell, if you can put
 7 it in a nutshell?
 8 A. Sorry, sir, around —
 9 Q. Around the causes for your frustration, the lack of
 10 moving forward, the lack of progress. Why was it in
 11 your view that you and your colleagues were waiting
 12 around like this?
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, it's GMP's job to call you
 14 forward, isn't it?
 15 A. Yes, sir. It's around communications and that working
 16 collectively.
 17 MR COOPER: Thank you. I asked for a nutshell and that's
 18 a good nutshell.
 19 I would like to take you, finally on Winchester, in
 20 terms of observations, to Kerslake, which is
 21 {INQ023508T/77}, please. Just page 77 on that.
 22 Go to the bottom of {INQ023508T/76}, please, to get
 23 context. The last four lines:
 24 "The firearms commander would have told you. It was
 25 quite clear from the CCTV that when the firearms

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1 resources started to arrive, they very quickly
 2 established a fairly safe working environment within the
 3 foyer as well as the concourse."
 4 Over the page, please:
 5 "Yeah, which you didn't know about."
 6 And you say:
 7 "Which is exactly what happened on
 8 Winchester Accord, isn't it? They swept through and
 9 actually left fire stood at the forward control point
 10 for what, 90 minutes?"
 11 Then you go on, towards the bottom:
 12 "So, I think there's something — this was that
 13 scenario, and there's various [permutations]. I think,
 14 picking up on the point I said — what you've learnt —
 15 what we learnt, for me personally, I don't think we're
 16 any — as just a multi-agency organisation, we're really
 17 moving on. The JESIP principles didn't work. It didn't
 18 work when we trained in Winchester Accord and it didn't
 19 work when it went for real. There's something
 20 fundamental and whether that does or doesn't come out —
 21 I'd be really disappointed if it doesn't come out in the
 22 report because..."
 23 And then Mr Levy intervenes. Again, is there
 24 anything you want to add to what I have just read or
 25 is that as you feel now, that — effectively what I have

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1 just read out?
 2 A. Yes, I think that captures what I felt and how I feel
 3 now around the principles and whether the principles
 4 around that response in that type of scenario would
 5 actually work in reality.
 6 Q. Those are matters that touch upon your question. Unless
 7 there's anything else that I can take you to, I'll move
 8 on from Winchester Accord.
 9 Can I take you back to your statement, please,
 10 paragraph 30. It's just the opening line, which rather
 11 tweaked my interest when I read it. We may be able to
 12 deal with it in short order:
 13 "As an area manager I am required to rescind all
 14 specialist qualifications."
 15 What does that mean?
 16 A. So ordinarily, there would only be one area manager or
 17 potentially only one area manager on duty at any one
 18 time. We spoke yesterday around the role of the
 19 assistant principal officer and having to maintain
 20 that —
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I cut you off? I'm really sorry.
 22 As I understood it, you can't carry on being a NILO when
 23 you're in this position because you have too many other
 24 things to do.
 25 A. Yes.

15

1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It doesn't mean you no longer had the
 2 training and the qualifications; it just means you're
 3 not going to operate it or you wouldn't have
 4 (overspeaking).
 5 A. You would take the experience of having that role with
 6 you, but what you wouldn't do would be maintain the
 7 ongoing training and competencies within the role.
 8 MR COOPER: Maybe I was being too legalistic with the word
 9 "rescind", sir.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, you could be.
 11 MR COOPER: I'll move on from that then.
 12 Paragraph 36, please. It's your observations on
 13 North West Fire Control. The CSR was formed and you
 14 deal with the transition:
 15 "As part of that process there was a reduction
 16 in the number of available Control staff at any one
 17 time, which removed some of the historical support
 18 mechanisms that had been built in for the operational
 19 crews and officers. When Control was based in-house
 20 they could act in a more dynamic manner, predominantly
 21 due to local knowledge. NWFC's processes and
 22 procedures, in particular in the early years, were
 23 heavily reliant upon action cards and process maps,
 24 where as a service we had been used to acting more
 25 dynamically. The CSR was established to allow us to

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1 bridge that gap and to manage resources more dynamically
 2 in the event of large scale and major incidents.”
 3 That dynamic aspiration, if I can put it that way,
 4 didn't really work, did it, on 22 May 2017?
 5 A. No, sir, not from within the command support room, no.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just let's look at this whole NWFC
 7 matter a bit. If they've got local knowledge, the
 8 operators, you think they are capable of doing a better
 9 job in the control room. It helps to do their job in
 10 a control room?
 11 A. Yes, sir.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. If they have no knowledge of the
 13 area then they can't do it. I'm not sure it actually
 14 affects what happened on the particular night we're
 15 talking about, 22 May, but if we're looking in general
 16 terms, as a quid pro quo for losing that local
 17 knowledge, I understand that you have the CSR.
 18 A. Sir.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So in your view, is NWFC plus the CSR,
 20 is that an equal facility to the old control room or
 21 would you still prefer the old control room back and not
 22 have the CSR? Or would you prefer both? How would you
 23 like it?
 24 A. How would I like it, sir? I think reflecting back on
 25 this, I think one of the, I would say, historical, but

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1 one of the most effective methods when we had our
 2 in-house Control was a link with operational officers,
 3 which was created very quickly. So invariably, that
 4 would be —
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: By contacting them on the phone?
 6 A. No, by physically being in the same room.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But we do know that by 10.31
 8 if we relate this to the specific incident, there
 9 wouldn't be anybody in, there wouldn't be any physical
 10 officers next door.
 11 A. No, sorry, sir. Going back to the question, sir, around
 12 the differences — so in normal working days, so through
 13 days when it was in-house, then it was very quickly that
 14 an officer from headquarters — somebody in an
 15 operational role would go and support and they would
 16 work collectively, so they'd bridge the operational gap
 17 very quickly.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that well.
 19 A. Historically, and I'm going back a number of years, that
 20 was also provided out of hours as well where we had an
 21 operational officer who was aligned to our in-house
 22 Control to again bridge that gap.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He'd actually be there all the time or
 24 just on (overspeaking)?
 25 A. On a 24/7 basis. I'm going back a number of years, but

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1 we had a duty officer who bridged the gap between
 2 in-house Control, he was operationally competent,
 3 experienced, and could give advice. To go back to your
 4 first question, for me, that would be that ideal
 5 scenario to bridge that gap.
 6 That wasn't in place and I accept that what we had
 7 from a command support room establishment didn't give us
 8 that richness, and clearly —
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's not as quick, apart from anything
 10 else, is it?
 11 A. No, sir.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You've all got get there.
 13 A. Just to add to that — I've clearly left the service,
 14 but the proactives and the discussion around mobilising
 15 an operational officer to North West Fire Control was
 16 becoming more of a norm to get somebody over there
 17 quickly to assist in the way that maybe we would have
 18 done historically.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 20 MR COOPER: I'm going to ask you a question and I've got
 21 a suspicion it might be a sensitive question, so don't
 22 answer it until everyone has considered it. It's
 23 a simple question: the command room, NWFC, is it
 24 actually in Manchester? Pause, please.
 25 (Pause)

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1 MR DE LA POER: So far as I'm aware —
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is the answer (overspeaking) Manchester?
 3 MR DE LA POER: — on the internet, the published address.
 4 MR WARNOCK: Yes, although I think the question (inaudible:
 5 no microphone).
 6 MR DE LA POER: I beg your pardon, I am so sorry. Again,
 7 I think that is published information.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper —
 9 MR SMITH: NWFC has a website. It's publicly available. It
 10 has all the details that I think Mr Cooper is exploring
 11 at the moment.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Even when things are publicly known,
 13 they remain sensitive for this inquiry on occasions.
 14 This is all right.
 15 You can answer the question.
 16 A. Sir, just for my clarity, is that in relation to North
 17 West Fire Control?
 18 MR COOPER: North West Fire Control.
 19 A. No, North West Fire Control is not in Manchester.
 20 Q. I'll leave it there.
 21 I just want to move on to a quick question, please,
 22 about situational awareness, which was an issue, to put
 23 it neutrally. Would you agree that situational
 24 awareness, in addition to the usual channels for the
 25 GMFRS, could have been obtained from Greater Manchester

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1 Police, NWAS or even from your own media liaison
 2 officer?
 3 A. Yes, sir, I think all of those avenues were open. Well,
 4 I say open, clearly —
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, you could have got — had you
 6 managed to contact the FDO or someone suitable in GMP,
 7 they could have given you it. If you'd got hold of
 8 something like the NILO in NWAS who was on duty he or
 9 she could have given you it as well. The media officer
 10 may be slightly different. You had access to the media
 11 and you did have someone there, didn't you, checking?
 12 A. Yes — sorry, sir, I suppose, just to clarify, at what
 13 point that situational awareness — because certainly if
 14 it's around my role and in the early stages, I think
 15 I had enough situational awareness to know that
 16 something big had happened and we were moving on. But
 17 I fully respect that there was a bigger picture around
 18 creating situational awareness.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, I only interrupted then
 20 because it seemed to me it could be a different
 21 situation with one of them.
 22 MR COOPER: It was perhaps a lazy question and I'll move on.
 23 Again, just topping and tailing a few issues, and
 24 Mr Harris will be able to deal with it in due course,
 25 but you state, it's in your paragraph 55, that you

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1 thought Mr Harris was on modified duties and there's
 2 some confusion at the moment as to whether he was off
 3 sick, but you recall he was on modified duties.
 4 What was your knowledge at the time about Mr Harris'
 5 position?
 6 A. Mr Harris was my line manager at that time so I was
 7 aware he wasn't in work.
 8 Q. And do you know why he wasn't in work?
 9 A. I'm not privy to that.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It might be confidential, I have
 11 absolutely no idea. The fact of the matter is he wasn't
 12 expected to be there and he's there.
 13 MR COOPER: I'm not asking for the precise medical analysis.
 14 Pause in case this is objectionable. Was he off sick as
 15 far as you are concerned?
 16 A. No, I think my understanding at the time was that he was
 17 on a modified duty role, which under normal
 18 circumstances a modified duty, somebody would remain
 19 available for work activity, but not be available on the
 20 operational rota, which was why I was surprised because
 21 it was the operational rota piece, not the absence from
 22 work.
 23 Q. This is my last question, and if I push closer to the
 24 boundary of what may be acceptable, but from what you
 25 know, did the reason for Mr Harris' modified duties —

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1 could it have impacted on his ability to perform
 2 adequately on the night of 22 May?
 3 A. Sir, I have no detail of what that modification was.
 4 Ordinarily, if someone's on modified duties it would be
 5 because there was some ailment, injury or something that
 6 prevented them from carrying out their role effectively.
 7 Q. I'll leave it there. We have Mr Harris soon.
 8 I want to go back to the questions you were asked
 9 yesterday about the leadership of the chief,
 10 Mr O'Reilly. Although you were asked questions
 11 yesterday, perfectly understandably and properly, about
 12 your mature reflected view on it, I want to ask you
 13 a little more about what you felt at the time and
 14 I understand that you would have felt at the time —
 15 well, emotional is the wrong word, it tends to downplay
 16 the depth of your feelings, but it was closer to the
 17 time. Nonetheless, would you agree with me that doesn't
 18 necessarily mean that your feelings at the time were any
 19 less valid today?
 20 A. They are the same.
 21 Q. Thank you. I just want to look at what you were saying
 22 around about — at the time as far as the chief was
 23 concerned. Let's just look at your statement perhaps to
 24 begin with. Paragraph 65, please:
 25 "By this point, in my view, the CFO had become

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1 a remote incident commander and what followed was
 2 confirmation of this. Following the request from NWAS,
 3 further discussion took place as to whether GMFRS' MTFA
 4 capability should be deployed, but the CFO said there
 5 was no requirement for the MTFA response. I disagreed
 6 with this because my perception of that incident at that
 7 point in time was that we were needed to treat severely
 8 injured casualties. We knew that the MTFA ability had
 9 an enhanced medical capability for casualty treatment
 10 and an ability to extract casualties, both of which were
 11 highly relevant."
 12 And then you go on in paragraph 6 (sic) to remind us
 13 of what else was said.
 14 But despite all that, it was apparent, wasn't it,
 15 that the chief was ignoring the wealth of experience
 16 that was available to him on the issue, on that issue,
 17 provided not only by you but Mr Fletcher and Mr Levy, do
 18 you agree?
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Nankivell?
 20 MR COOPER: By Mr Nankivell, of course.
 21 A. Yes, sir.
 22 Q. Did that surprise you?
 23 A. Yes, it did. In my experience of command situations,
 24 generally — I think the chair alluded to it yesterday,
 25 the taking on board the views and the opinions of others

24

1 to help form that plan is part and parcel of it .
 2 Q. That's a sign of good leadership, isn't it , to take into
 3 account and to listen , to make decisions, maybe?
 4 A. Yes, sir .
 5 Q. But to listen to the experience around him or her and to
 6 come to an informed decision based on that? That's good
 7 leadership, isn't it?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. And clearly what the chief was displaying on this night
 10 in that particular instance was bad leadership, wasn't
 11 it? I know it's hard for you, I do appreciate that --
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's stop for a moment. At some stage
 13 I'm going to have to decide whether, no doubt, the chief
 14 made the right decisions on the night and you are firmly
 15 of the view that he made the wrong decision.
 16 A. I'm firmly of the view, based on what my understanding
 17 of what people knew, it was wrong. What I don't know is
 18 what information the chief may have had through
 19 communications. It goes down to what I alluded to
 20 yesterday: I think we missed the opportunity to capture
 21 who knew what at that point in time.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand all that and obviously I'm
 23 going to hear all that, and we'll make our own
 24 decisions. When your advice is disregarded, like
 25 counsel sometimes when their submissions are overruled,

25

1 you don't tend to like it too much, you perhaps think
 2 the wrong decision's been made and you may be right.
 3 You say he should have listened more to what the wealth
 4 of experience in the room was saying to him?
 5 A. Yes, sir .
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Is that fair enough, Mr Cooper?
 7 MR COOPER: Yes, sir. Perhaps you'll understand, sir, I am
 8 taking the judicial review attitude to it, that is the
 9 process rather than the decision is what I'm trying to
 10 examine here and whether the chief actually allowed the
 11 process to take place, whether his decision was right or
 12 wrong.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We also do need to understand these sort
 14 of things were having to happen quickly because they
 15 certainly hadn't happened quickly up until then, so all
 16 that of course we have to take into account as well. He
 17 should have listened, perhaps he didn't listen properly,
 18 maybe take proper regard to it, and you can say he made
 19 his decision too quickly. I fortunately have some time
 20 to make my decisions normally, so hopefully there's more
 21 chance of getting them right. I hope that's fair .
 22 MR COOPER: Of course. Of course.
 23 Would it be right to say this, to try and curtail
 24 this analysis, and I've got the reference if you want to
 25 look at it, you described the chief's attitude at time

26

1 as bombastic?
 2 A. Yes, sir , that was raised yesterday, and I think ...
 3 I don't agree that it was and if I've made that, I've
 4 probably made that in frustration. I think I alluded
 5 yesterday that there was a decision to be made. My view
 6 is that he had a certain approach based on what he
 7 found. So I don't agree with that terminology of
 8 bombastic. I would like to find a different word for
 9 that, but it was maybe just sort of too autocratic in
 10 its approach for the environment we were in.
 11 Q. That's an expression -- and I'll reference it ,
 12 {INQ000276/4}. That's the word you used, isn't it,
 13 bombastic?
 14 A. I believe that was raised yesterday. I'm not quite sure
 15 under what circumstances --
 16 Q. Let's have a look at that then, {INQ000276/4}, please.
 17 Page 1, please, so we can appreciate the document
 18 {INQ000276/1}.
 19 This is a conversation -- were you involved in this
 20 particular conversation? It may well be that you
 21 weren't there, to be fair .
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It doesn't look like it.
 23 MR COOPER: It doesn't. {INQ000276/4}. Let's just look at
 24 where I have got this from and it may well be something
 25 I have to ask another witness. Page 4, please.

27

1 MR DE LA POER: If we go up to {INQ000276/3}, I think we'll
 2 see (inaudible: no microphone) --
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 4 MR COOPER: I am grateful then to Mr de la Poer. I wondered
 5 why I had made an apparent mistake on that. Thank you.
 6 This looks like this is coming from you then,
 7 Mr Etches. There, at some part in that, we'll see
 8 a reference, I say confidently because I wouldn't have
 9 written it down otherwise, where you described -- there
 10 it is, three-quarters of the way down:
 11 "His demeanour... bombastic, predicated on
 12 seniority ."
 13 Do you see that?
 14 A. Yes, sir .
 15 Q. Did you say, "Bombastic, predicated on seniority"?
 16 A. I'm not sure. I've not seen this before so I don't know
 17 where this took place.
 18 Q. I think this was a document that was highlighted -- I'm
 19 not criticising you, but I'm not showing you this
 20 document by surprise. I wouldn't want that thought.
 21 It's simply that line, it seemed to have been recorded
 22 that when you were asked about the demeanour of the
 23 chief, there was a pause, and you said:
 24 "Bombastic... predicated on seniority ."
 25 And I just wondered whether you wanted to hold by

28

1 that.

2 A. No, I don't remember making the statement, and as I said

3 before, it wouldn't really, on reflection, be a word

4 that I would want to use. If it's used it, it's out of

5 frustration. I'm not quite sure what this scenario of

6 this discussion is.

7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are these notes or is it a transcript?

8 MR DE LA POER: These are notes, as I understand it. If we

9 go up to {INQ000276/3}, the introduction, or possibly

10 {INQ000276/2}. They certainly start by interviewing one

11 person and then appear to be interviewing Mr Etches.

12 One more page, please. There we are, the very bottom of

13 {INQ000276/2}. We can see that they appear to be notes.

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What's not entirely clear is whether

15 bombastic is a suggestion from the questioner or the

16 answer. I just can't tell. As you did yesterday, I've

17 been looking up the dictionary definition of bombastic:

18 "High sounding but with little meaning, inflated,

19 blustering, ranting, blathering, verbose, wordy,

20 turgid."

21 MR COOPER: I hope that's not personally directed!

22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, no, I was giving you the dictionary

23 definition of bombastic.

24 MR COOPER: Let's move on from that.

25 One other reference for you so that the chair has it

29

1 available to him should so he require it, {INQ004257/4}.

2 This is a debrief and a list of observations you

3 made. Page 4:

4 "How did Operation Newtown not go well?"

5 Again, as always with witnesses, I am not going to

6 read through the whole thing, the chair has it. You

7 just refresh your memory, Mr Etches, and flesh out, if

8 you want to, any one of those bullet points. Don't feel

9 obliged to, or whether you simply stand by them. Are

10 there any of those bullet points you want to develop?

11 A. No, I stand by them, sir. There's... Yeah, maybe the

12 bottom one is the one that resonates the strongest with

13 me. I stand by those. I think those were observations

14 at the time of things that could have been better

15 improved or actually fed in.

16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So the bottom one, the "no hot debrief"?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That was the order of whom? Presumably

19 the chief, would it be? Who else would be giving that

20 order?

21 A. We were informed the following day that that had come as

22 a directive from the mayor at the time. Whether it was

23 under the terms of hot debrief, but certainly not to

24 talk about the incident. I think officers subsequently

25 got an opportunity to ask whether that was validated or

30

1 not and we never really got to the bottom of it, it just

2 never happened.

3 MR COOPER: Do you know why? This keeps cropping up every

4 now and again. Do you know why that request or —

5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, Mr Cooper, I think I want to

6 differentiate. What we've heard quite a lot of is:

7 don't go and talk to the firefighters about it, which

8 lots of them wanted — lots of senior officers wanted to

9 do because of the disagreements between the two. That

10 I think is different from a hot debrief for the command

11 team. I'm not sure we have heard that. I may be wrong.

12 MR COOPER: I have made the mistake of joining the two

13 together.

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.

15 MR COOPER: And maybe you could then help us, if you can,

16 and if you can't, you can't, why that directive of no

17 hot debrief for the command team had taken place? You

18 say it came from the mayor's office, did you?

19 A. Yes. Why it didn't take place, I don't know. It was

20 much needed in the following days because, clearly, we

21 knew that things had not played out in the way where we

22 started from a strong position with having good,

23 well-trained officers in place, good procedures, good

24 protocols, good comms, to a point where, unfortunately,

25 what happened on the night and the delayed response.

31

1 The hot debrief, for me, would have given us the

2 opportunity to at least find out —

3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand the benefits of a hot

4 debrief, I'm sure we all do. Okay? This is speculation

5 as to where it came from. I'm certainly not keen to

6 involve the mayor's office at the moment in anything.

7 If it becomes necessary in the future, then we will do.

8 But at the moment there is no reliable information that

9 that's where it came from and we'll see how important it

10 becomes in the future, if that's all right with you.

11 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir. I have no further questions.

12 MR DE LA POER: Can I finally turn to Mr Warnock.

13 Questions from MR WARNOCK

14 MR WARNOCK: Mr Etches, could I start by taking you back to

15 Winchester Accord.

16 Mr Lopez, could you kindly put up {INQ004521/1}.

17 Mr Etches, this is a structured debrief which the

18 resilience forum conducted after Winchester Accord. We

19 see from the debrief participants that you were not

20 present, but John Aspinall and Billy Myers from the

21 Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service were present.

22 Would you have fed anything back to either of those

23 individuals about your experience of Winchester Accord?

24 A. Certainly. I think Billy Myers was our Gold

25 representative on the evening. I can't quite recollect

32

1 whether we had at the end of the exercise a discussion
 2 around how things had gone or whether it was just sort
 3 of an end element of it. But I'm sure that the
 4 feedback that I fed into the exercise would have gone
 5 through both John and Billy in their respective roles
 6 within the organisation.
 7 Q. We see also that one of the debrief participants was
 8 Catherine Hankinson, who was the GMP Gold. Is she
 9 somebody you knew?
 10 A. No, sir.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think she was in the Silver room when
 12 you were there, as Gold commander, would she have been?
 13 MR WARNOCK: Were you in the same room as the
 14 Gold commanders?
 15 A. No, sir, a different room.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 17 MR WARNOCK: But I do want to ask you about a point related
 18 to what the chairman has just asked. If we could go
 19 down to the next page, please, Mr Lopez {INQ004521/2}.
 20 If you look in the fourth box under "areas for
 21 improvement", you'll see it says:
 22 "Silver command had all the agencies in one place,
 23 allowing passing of information, and partners were
 24 passing information to their respective Golds, but
 25 police Gold was separate, causing a disconnect."

33

1 You were in Silver command, as I understand it.
 2 A. Sir.
 3 Q. Do you recollect there being a disconnect on the evening
 4 in relation to the police Gold?
 5 A. My recollection on the evening was that the police Gold
 6 were coming into the Silver suite and carrying out
 7 briefings, so my recollection was that there was
 8 communications. It's not something I would recognise
 9 readily, sir.
 10 Q. So you're not able to help with what — because it seems
 11 to have been raised by a number of individuals. You're
 12 not able to assist with what that disconnect was or what
 13 it means when it says "police Gold was separate"?
 14 A. No. Communications through myself and Mr Myers, who was
 15 Gold, would have been through either mobile phone or
 16 radio within the room. He wasn't in the same room as
 17 me, clearly he was in the Gold, so I'm not quite sure
 18 what that disconnect would be. I'm really not, sir.
 19 Q. If you can't help, you can't help.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Could you go to the next page, just
 21 quickly? {INQ004521/3}.
 22 (Pause)
 23 And the next page. Sorry, I hope you don't mind me
 24 doing this, just while it's in my mind. {INQ004521/4}.
 25 Next page. {INQ004521/5}. Okay, thank you very

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1 much.
 2 MR WARNOCK: Before we leave it, if you don't mind, sir,
 3 could we go back to {INQ004521/3}, Mr Lopez.
 4 You'll see, Mr Etches, that towards the middle of
 5 the page, one of the issues raised was:
 6 "The ability to undertake an effective joint
 7 decision of risk was hampered by the lack of tri—service
 8 commanders coming together at the earliest
 9 opportunities. Communication at the scene could have
 10 been better."
 11 We see that was raised by three individuals and then
 12 it was said that:
 13 "JESIP training was required and needs to be
 14 applied."
 15 Are you able to help with what that was about?
 16 A. Sir, my interpretation of that would be, as we alluded
 17 to before and I think it was raised within the notes,
 18 where the firearms officers were at the forward control
 19 point and fire and ambulance were still at an RVP, so
 20 they didn't have the coming together for those
 21 tri—service commanders before firearms officers moved
 22 forward.
 23 Q. In relation to — it says:
 24 "JESIP training required and needs to be applied."
 25 Were you aware or not of the training that

35

1 Mr Fletcher put in process, which he got in contact with
 2 GMP about arranging?
 3 A. Yes, I think ... I can't remember exact details, but
 4 I know Mr Fletcher was very proactive in bridging any
 5 identified gaps from within his role. There was various
 6 periods of JESIP training that was undertaken. I can't
 7 remember specifics, but I do know that there was...
 8 There was endeavours made to address the shortcomings
 9 that were found through the JESIP training.
 10 Q. A different topic. I would like to take you, if I may,
 11 to the sequence of communications which North West Fire
 12 Control have very helpfully prepared, {INQ041473/1}.
 13 Mr Lopez, if we could kindly go to {INQ041473/55},
 14 please.
 15 On page 55, you'll see reference at the entry at
 16 23.42, and this was a call that Mr de la Poer QC asked
 17 you about yesterday:
 18 "GM Meakin called to AM Etches."
 19 And that call lasted for just over 2 minutes; yes?
 20 A. Yes, sir.
 21 Q. In fact, there was then a second call between you and
 22 Mr Meakin, if we go to {INQ041473/65}, please.
 23 You'll see an entry for 00.01, one minute past
 24 midnight:
 25 "GM Meakin call to AM Etches."

36

1 And that call lasted for 1.5 minutes. If you could
2 just bear in mind the times of those two calls, 23.42
3 and 00.01, could I then ask Mr Lopez to put up your
4 witness statement, please, {INQ026720/12}, at
5 paragraph 58.

6 In paragraph 58, Mr Etches, you set out the account,
7 as you recalled it when you made the statement, of your
8 conversation with Mr Meakin at 23.42. Do you see that?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. You said he told you he'd be trying to make contact with
11 the force duty officer without success, he was becoming
12 frustrated. He asked you to contact GMP. He informed
13 you that NWS were utilising Central as an RVP and you
14 record your surprise about that because it's suggested
15 communications had broken down around co-locating,
16 although you would have expected NWS to have at least
17 told NWFC of their intention to use Central. But you
18 also accept there might have been a predetermined RVP
19 for them. Is that the recollection of that call that
20 you stand by?

21 A. Yes, sir. I think that first call at 23.42 was the
22 first contact I'd had with Mr Meakin from being
23 mobilised to the incident, I think, so that was where
24 I was -- I'm pretty sure that was the first time I was
25 aware that we still had appliances at the RVP.

37

1 Q. I can tell you, in his witness statement -- for the
2 inquiry's reference it's {INQ026731/1}, paragraph 64,
3 I'm not going to take you to it -- he describes that
4 call with you in broadly similar terms, albeit some of
5 the specific details are slightly different. For
6 instance, he was keen to know where the police tactical
7 firearms commander was.

8 In his oral evidence -- I don't know if you saw his
9 oral evidence, did you?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. You may recollect, and it's Day 121, page 87
12 {Day121/87:1}, he said he did not recall the specifics
13 of the call, but suspected it was:
14 "... a general discussion about what we knew at the
15 time in terms of resources, where we were, what
16 conversations had taken place, and who was in contact
17 with who."

18 Does that sound about right? It seems to accord
19 with what you're saying.

20 A. Yes, I think -- yes, absolutely. I think the only
21 thing, I mentioned it yesterday, is I... I now feel
22 that he may have been under the impression that we'd
23 been in the room longer than we were and therefore may
24 have had more information.

25 Q. Right. What Mr Meakin did not mention, either in his

38

1 written statement or oral evidence, and what you do not
2 mention in paragraph 58, was a decision by either of you
3 to move to Central at that point. Do you agree with
4 that?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. But at paragraph 59 of your statement, if Mr Lopez could
7 kindly scroll down, please, you say:

8 "After further discussion with GM Meakin, it was
9 agreed that GMFRS resources should move to
10 Central Station and establish a new RVP."

11 What I want to ask you is this: do you think that
12 that further discussion about the resources moving to
13 Central may in fact have taken place during the call at
14 00.01?

15 A. I think the timings, sir, would tie up around travel
16 times and distances, so potentially, sir.

17 Q. In fact, you say that this was done in convoy and
18 GM Meakin confirmed attendance at Central at 00.13. In
19 fact, if we could go back, please, to the sequence of
20 events, {INQ041473/65}, we in fact see an entry at
21 00.02.02, that G19 P2 were in attendance at
22 Manchester Central Fire Station. And if we go over to
23 {INQ041473/66}, an entry made by Janine Carden at
24 00.02.49 saying:

25 "Following liaison with CFO O'Reilly and in the

39

1 absence of forward control point being declared by GMP,
2 crews have moved forward to G16 Thompson Street to
3 co-locate with ambulance standby."

4 Just to help you with that timing of 00.13, if we go
5 to {INQ041473/69}, please. It seems you had a call with
6 Mr Etches (sic) at 00.13, which lasted for 0.98 of
7 a minute.

8 A. Sir.

9 Q. And so that may be where you get the reference in
10 paragraph 59; do you think that may be right?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Just to be clear, the decision to move to Central from
13 Philips Park, was that a decision that needed the
14 approval of the command support room?

15 A. No, I don't think it needed approval, but I can't
16 recollect the conversation in full, whether... It
17 was -- we needed to get to Central to move more but at
18 the same time still seeking to see whether we had any
19 more information from GMP around a forward control
20 point. So a bit of a dual approach really. Yes, they
21 wanted to get the Central, but the conversation, I can
22 only imagine, coming in through the command support room
23 is: unless you've got anything else that will help us
24 make an informed decision around the forward control
25 point.

40

1 Q. So it would make sense that they would speak to the
2 command support room first to see if you could get that
3 information?
4 A. My view, sir, given the situation and the lack of
5 information they had at that point in time, then yes.
6 Q. One final topic. You have frankly said, Mr Etches, that
7 you cannot remember the detail or order of discussions
8 on the night in the command support room. That's right,
9 isn't it?
10 A. Sir.
11 Q. What the inquiry has seen in relation to piecing
12 together decisions made by key police officers on the
13 night -- well, some of them at least -- the inquiry has
14 been greatly assisted by the fact that they used
15 dictaphones. Dictaphones were not regularly used by the
16 Fire Service at the time of these events, were they, or
17 were they?
18 A. No, sir, my experience of using a dictaphone was limited
19 to advice whilst working as a NILO as good practice.
20 Q. Given your experience on the night, do you think
21 it would be helpful if in future those making command
22 decisions, whether they're in the command support room
23 or at the incident ground, had dictaphones supplied to
24 them to use?
25 A. My answer to that, sir, is absolutely.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Forget about dictaphones for a moment.
2 If you are in the command support room, is there any
3 reason why the whole thing shouldn't be taped?
4 A. No, sir. I go back to that point around the hot debrief
5 because that would have given us the facility.
6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Quite. That's another reason why you
7 should have had a hot debrief because you weren't
8 recording everything --
9 A. Yes, sir.
10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- and that would have helped. I mean,
11 it's protection for you as much as for anybody else.
12 I assume if you actually had the place wired, so people
13 could hear what's -- it could all be recorded, it would
14 make it easier for everybody.
15 A. Yes.
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Anyway.
17 A. Absolutely, sir.
18 MR WARNOCK: Those are all the questions I had for you.
19 Thank you very much.
20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much.
21 MR GREANEY: Sir, we have no further questions for the
22 witness.
23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much. I'm very grateful
24 for you coming and sorry you had to come back as well,
25 so thank you for that and for helping me with your

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1 experiences on the night and your expertise.
2 Mr Greaney, I think the next witness is Mr Harris.
3 MR GREANEY: It is.
4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just wanted to discuss with you, and
5 so all other CPs can hear, what the parameters of
6 Mr Harris' evidence should be.
7 MR GREANEY: Yes.
8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What has so far been said about
9 Mr Harris is Mr Nankivell didn't think much of the way
10 he did his job, a number of people think he shouldn't
11 have been there on the night. Mr Nankivell thought he
12 got in the way. Is there anything else that Mr Harris
13 did which could have had an effect on what happened on
14 this particular night from the evidence that you have
15 seen and what you wish to adduce?
16 MR GREANEY: No. The reality is that Mr Harris didn't
17 arrive in the CSR until 00.07. He then almost
18 immediately became embroiled in what I will neutrally
19 describe as the debate about who to deploy to the scene,
20 and I don't believe that any of the criticisms that have
21 been made of him are ones which can, on a rational
22 basis, be described as causative of what went wrong.
23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He obviously has to have the opportunity
24 to deal with the publicly made criticisms by
25 Mr Nankivell, which he has done. Everybody has said

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1 right from the start of this inquiry the last thing we
2 want to do is to have scapegoats for anything that
3 happened. So I'm saying this so all CPs can make
4 submissions about this if they wish to: I do not see the
5 relevance at the moment of a general attack, if that's
6 thought appropriate, on Mr Harris as to his competence
7 to do the job generally unless that in some way relates
8 or is said to relate to what happened on the night.
9 I am sure everybody will understand that and understand
10 why I wish that to happen. I say this so there is an
11 opportunity for CPs and you to discuss the matter and
12 of course make representations to me if people think
13 that I'm wrong in what I'm saying, which they are
14 perfectly entitled to make submissions about.
15 MR GREANEY: Sir, I'm grateful that you've raised the issue
16 in that way. I was in fact going to say something about
17 Mr Harris myself because, bearing in mind the stage at
18 which he arrived and the role he played, he was, to use
19 the terminology used by Mr de la Poer yesterday, I won't
20 say it was an unnecessary cog, that's a different issue,
21 but he was certainly a small cog in these events.
22 Certainly I propose to be no more than 45 minutes in
23 my questioning of him. I hope that others will also
24 apply limits to their questions. I'm quite certain they
25 will. One of the reasons for making that request is

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1 because it is important in the highest degree that we
 2 should at least start the evidence of Mr Pilling today
 3 because next week, we have a number of witnesses who
 4 have to be called on particular days because of their
 5 own commitments, and things will go or may go badly
 6 wrong unless they start Mr Pilling today.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I make absolutely clear that I'm not
 8 seeking to leave out anything which is relevant to the
 9 inquiry of any contribution that he may have made, if
 10 it is said, to what happened and what went wrong on the
 11 night. So please let that be understood.
 12 MR GREANEY: I am sure that will be understood.
 13 (Overspeaking) I have met Mr Harris, who, it seems to
 14 me, appears to be a thoughtful witness who has reflected
 15 on events of that night and who I expect to provide
 16 clear and frank answers to the questions that obviously
 17 will be put to him.
 18 MR COOPER: I'm disappointed we should have this discussion
 19 now. I'd have liked advance notice of the position.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm really sorry. I just wanted to have
 21 this out in the open now so we don't -- there's no
 22 misunderstanding.
 23 MR COOPER: There's no misunderstanding, but there is
 24 disappointment. We will argue, and would have liked to
 25 have put a reasoned argument together on this to meet

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1 the position, and I understand Mr Greaney may have met
 2 Mr Harris outside of the hearing room and come to his
 3 own concluded views as to the demeanour of a witness.
 4 Interesting, but utterly irrelevant, if I may say so.
 5 You hear a degree of frustration in my tone and I am
 6 frustrated. Probably for -- well, it's not often that
 7 during the course of this inquiry I have felt like this.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, it's much better to have
 9 these things out in the open now and discuss the
 10 evidence and the scope of the evidence in a civilised,
 11 reasonable way now rather than you finding me
 12 intervening when you are doing something which you will
 13 find even more frustrating --
 14 MR COOPER: Absolutely, I agree.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not ruling, I'm just raising the
 16 topic for discussion.
 17 MR COOPER: Sir, I would like to understand, and it may be
 18 I just need to reflect on this, what is permitted and
 19 what isn't. Because what I don't want and what you
 20 don't want is me asking questions --
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Exactly.
 22 MR COOPER: -- and you having to say...
 23 And let's deal with this now --
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I am happy to.
 25 MR COOPER: -- and I absolutely agree with that.

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1 The overall approach that we take to Mr Harris -- by
 2 the way I see the last witness is sitting here. I don't
 3 know whether he needs to. I am quite content if he
 4 wants to --
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't think we're going to be very
 6 long.
 7 MR COOPER: One of the issues as far as Mr Harris is
 8 concerned, and I've been building and developing of this
 9 to lead up to Mr Harris, it's trailing where we are
 10 going on this, is culture.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 12 MR COOPER: Culture. And the three strands are breakdown of
 13 policy, leadership and culture. Mr Harris, in terms of
 14 his attitude, potentially, subject to your assessment,
 15 sir, in terms of the observations made by a number of
 16 witnesses about his leadership and about the culture
 17 within the Fire Service, which we submit was one at
 18 times of, I'll use my words carefully, I used the word
 19 bullying, let's use the word autocratic.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, I have allowed questions
 21 relating to whether people are regarded as being bullies
 22 and I'm not going to stop that.
 23 What I'm concerned about is a sort of -- it's really
 24 Mr Nankivell's view, he's perfectly entitled to have it,
 25 but I don't really want to be examining whether he,

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1 Mr Harris, is a competent officer in the way he does his
 2 job. But if you're talking about things that relate to
 3 the Fire Service culture generally, which clearly may
 4 have affected what happened on this night, then I am not
 5 going to stop you. It's just -- well, you've heard what
 6 I've said. Perhaps you and Mr Greaney can talk.
 7 Mr Greaney often has a preliminary view about
 8 people, which often are not his views by the end, and
 9 I certainly take no notice of them whatsoever. So
 10 please bear that in mind.
 11 MR COOPER: And the submissions I make, I'm sure you know
 12 now, Mr Greaney and I have a good and fruitful personal
 13 and professional relationship, I have to say, and I make
 14 no criticism of him. It's just an issue which is
 15 important to those we represent. We've been building to
 16 this moment and we would like the opportunity, so far as
 17 you feel it is appropriate for us to pursue it, under
 18 those headings of culture and leadership.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm perfectly happy with that because
 20 that obviously affects what happened on the night. What
 21 I wanted to avoid was a general attack on Mr Harris as
 22 to his competence to be doing his job generally, which
 23 doesn't seem to be relevant. Culture, yes, fine. But
 24 I hope you understand where I want to put the limits.
 25 You are perfectly entitled to raise the matter. That's

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1 why I have done it now, so we can actually have
 2 a civilised discussion about it, rather than me saying
 3 to you when you're in the middle of your
 4 cross-examination, which can be very frustrating,
 5 because it's happened to me in the past, when somebody
 6 intervenes and says: why are you asking that, what does
 7 it have to do with it?
 8 MR COOPER: I do understand, sir, and of course --
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And it's done in the presence of
 10 (overspeaking) --
 11 MR COOPER: By now -- by now -- by now we know your
 12 interventions are positive and helpful. We have worked
 13 together since September and we respect your position.
 14 But the questions that I might ask that might be
 15 interpreted as personal of Mr Harris, and they are not,
 16 are simply used to exemplify the problem which is wider.
 17 So it may well be perceived on asking Mr Harris, with
 18 your permission questions which might sound personal,
 19 they are simply to reflect the general culture at the
 20 time. So if that helps in terms of progress --
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's see where we go.
 22 MR COOPER: Thank you.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm quite sure that although you have
 24 been building to Mr Harris, you may not have stopped
 25 building, I predict.

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1 Shall we have a quarter of an hour gap?
 2 MR GREANEY: Let's have 20 minutes, sir, so I can speak to
 3 Mr Cooper.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Absolutely.
 5 (10.44 am)
 6 (A short break)
 7 (11.08 am)
 8 MR GREANEY: Sir, this is Mr Harris, in one moment I will
 9 ask that he be sworn. But first of all, can I alert all
 10 core participants to the prospect, indeed high
 11 likelihood, that we will need to sit next Friday. Can I
 12 say that if anyone has a particular problem with that,
 13 if they can raise it with me privately in the first
 14 instance.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 16 MR GEOFF HARRIS (affirmed)
 17 Questions from MR GREANEY
 18 MR GREANEY: Would you begin by telling us your full name,
 19 please?
 20 A. It's Geoffrey Harris.
 21 Q. Mr Harris, it is going to be important, because you are
 22 softly spoken, that you keep your voice up nice and
 23 loud, please.
 24 On 22 May 2017, were you an assistant chief fire
 25 officer with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service?

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1 A. Yes, I was.
 2 Q. Did you, in response to the attack upon the arena and
 3 those present there, attend the command support room at
 4 00.07 on 23 May at the request of the chief fire
 5 officer?
 6 A. Yes, I did.
 7 Q. And did you then perform what might be described as an
 8 undefined role within the command support room?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. In your witness statement, paragraph 48 of your
 11 statement of 11 November 2019, {INQ026693/1}, in that
 12 witness statement you say:
 13 "I undertook a support role on the night of the
 14 arena attack, albeit not, in my opinion, a significant
 15 role."
 16 A. Yes, sir.
 17 Q. Do you stand by that?
 18 A. I do, sir.
 19 Q. As you'll appreciate, we'll come back to all of that,
 20 but first of all we need to know about your professional
 21 background. Can I be clear that what I'm interested in
 22 is whether your expertise in certain aspects of the work
 23 of the Fire and Rescue Service particularly suited you
 24 to a role that night in the CSR. Does that make sense?
 25 A. It does.

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1 Q. Let's work to that issue. Did you join
 2 Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service in
 3 January 1983?
 4 A. Yes, sir.
 5 Q. Did you retire on 23 February 2018, after more than
 6 35 years of service?
 7 A. I think technically I actually retired in the March.
 8 I had my last day of work in February that year and then
 9 had 2 or 3 weeks' leave after that.
 10 Q. Thank you for that detail. I think I'm right that in
 11 2018, after 35 years of service, you retired?
 12 A. That's right.
 13 Q. And did you retire in the senior rank of ACFO?
 14 A. I did, sir.
 15 Q. Much earlier in your career, during the 1990s, did you
 16 develop a particular interest in the area of fire
 17 protection?
 18 A. Yes, sir, I did.
 19 Q. Did you start to develop an expertise in that particular
 20 area?
 21 A. Yes, sir, I did.
 22 Q. In 2005 were you promoted to the rank of group manager,
 23 based in fire protection at the headquarters of GMFRS?
 24 A. Yes, I was.
 25 Q. In 2008 were you promoted to area manager with

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1 responsibility for Bolton and Salford, but also with
 2 a service-wide responsibility for the health and safety
 3 department?
 4 A. Yes, that's correct.
 5 Q. The same year, later within it, did you become area
 6 manager for fire protection?
 7 A. Yes, I did.
 8 Q. Thereafter, for the remainder of your career, the
 9 following 10 years, did you remain in that area, fire
 10 protection, within the prevention and protection
 11 department?
 12 A. Yes, I did, sir.
 13 Q. Being promoted to ACFO and becoming the director of
 14 prevention and protection in 2015?
 15 A. That's correct.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can you tell me in a couple of words
 17 what prevention and protection is all about?
 18 A. In essence, if you see on our Fire Service vehicles, it
 19 talks about prevent, protect and respond. Prevention is
 20 about stopping fires from happening in the first place.
 21 Protection is about if they do happen, what is it that
 22 people are trained with or within a building that
 23 actually protects them from fire, and then response
 24 obviously follows from that.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much.

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1 MR GREANEY: So prevention is obvious. And protection is
 2 really about ensuring that if there is a fire, the
 3 effects are mitigated by the way in which buildings are
 4 constructed?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Compartmentalisation?
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. And ensuring there are means of escape and people know
 9 where they are and so on?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. So that has been the focus of your career, prevention
 12 and protection?
 13 A. In terms of a day job, yes.
 14 Q. Undoubtedly, I would have thought, all would agree that
 15 that is work of significant importance, but the question
 16 is: did that focus of your career give you a skill set
 17 that was of any particular value in responding to
 18 a terrorist attack?
 19 A. Not that particular element of my career, but during the
 20 time that we've spoken about, certainly from 2001
 21 onwards, I was a flexible duty officer within
 22 Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, providing
 23 operational response as well as my day job in prevention
 24 and protection. Through that, whilst that didn't of
 25 itself give me any expertise in relation to terrorist

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1 attack, it certainly gave me expertise and experience in
 2 responding to significant incidents and, after it was
 3 established and to some extent prior to it being
 4 established, experience of the CSR.
 5 Q. As you will appreciate, we've heard from a number of
 6 senior firefighters, some of whom have spent all of
 7 their careers or much of their careers as operational
 8 firefighters.
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. We've also heard from those with experience as NILOs.
 11 Really, what I'm concerned to understand is whether in
 12 terms of operational experience you had very limited
 13 such experience compared with such officers.
 14 A. Yes, I would have had. I had experience of working with
 15 NILOs in previous incidents, but they weren't terrorist
 16 incidents.
 17 Q. As you will appreciate, what I'm driving at is whether
 18 the selection of you to go to the CSR that night was
 19 a sensible choice or whether there were others who were
 20 better placed to provide support if any person was
 21 needed.
 22 A. I think from my perspective, what I was expecting to
 23 walk into in the CSR was an incident that we already had
 24 a significant attendance at, and that what would follow
 25 from that is the need for significant pieces of work to

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1 be done within the CSR and linking—in to other
 2 organisations. And it was more about the volume of work
 3 necessarily rather than my expertise.
 4 Q. And we are going to get on to your role and whether you
 5 had one. But as you were deployed, my word, to the CSR
 6 that night, it sounds as if what you thought you were
 7 going to be was an extra pair of hands?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. As you will appreciate, we're going to get to 22 May
 10 fairly quickly, I hope, but first of all there are
 11 a couple of other issues. First of all, did you watch
 12 the evidence of Group Manager Ben Levy?
 13 A. I saw some of it, but I couldn't say that I saw the
 14 majority of it. It was probably less than half of it.
 15 Q. Well, his attention was drawn at the very beginning of
 16 CTI's questions to what had been said on behalf of the
 17 Greater Manchester Combined Authority when it made its
 18 opening statement. Did you see that part of his
 19 evidence?
 20 A. No, I didn't.
 21 Q. So that you know, he agreed with what was said on behalf
 22 of GMCA. Let me draw that to your attention, so what
 23 they said, and ask whether you agree with it too.
 24 In GMCA's opening statement, Mr Warnock said this
 25 and I am going to quote his words. I know that he won't

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1 mind me doing so. He said:
 2 "In relation to the Fire Service response on the
 3 night, we say at the outset that GMFRS accepts and
 4 agrees with the conclusions of the Fire and Rescue
 5 expert, Mr Hall, that its initial actions in response to
 6 the arena bombing were neither adequate nor effective.
 7 It is unacceptable that it took over 2 hours for the
 8 Fire and Rescue Service to attend the arena. On behalf
 9 of GMFRS we would like to say to the families and
 10 victims that we are sorry that this happened. The
 11 inquiry will hear evidence from many individual GMFRS
 12 witnesses who still have profound feelings of
 13 frustration and deep anguish that they were not there to
 14 help."
 15 That is what was said.
 16 Can I ask you, as a senior firefighter at the time
 17 and present in the CSR, do you agree that the initial
 18 actions of the Fire and Rescue Service were not adequate
 19 and were not effective?
 20 A. I'd agree they were far from adequate or effective.
 21 I don't know if it's appropriate, but if I may, could
 22 I extend my personal apologies for the failure of the
 23 Fire and Rescue Service to respond adequately on that
 24 night.
 25 Q. Do you agree, more specifically, that it is unacceptable

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1 that it took over 2 hours for the Fire and Rescue
 2 Service to get to the arena?
 3 A. Completely unacceptable.
 4 Q. And it's clear therefore that you will agree that when
 5 we actually put that into numbers, the position is
 6 stark. We've heard that the average response time of
 7 GMFRS is 6 minutes?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. And what does that 6 minutes represent?
 10 A. It depends how it has been measured. Some different
 11 Fire and Rescue Services measure it slightly
 12 differently. So some will measure it from the point at
 13 which the control centre actually receives the call to
 14 the point at which the first appliance actually books in
 15 attendance at the incident. Other Fire and Rescue
 16 Services measure it from the time at which the control
 17 centre actually dispatch the appliances to the first
 18 appliance arriving. It's my understanding that in
 19 GMFRS, we measured it from the time at which the
 20 Fire Control actually dispatch the appliance to the time
 21 of arrival of the first appliance.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: As they never did.
 23 MR GREANEY: As they never did, yes. Six minutes might not
 24 be the most helpful comparison in this case.
 25 But at any rate, as would be entirely to be

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1 expected, bearing in mind that you will generally be
 2 dealing, for example, with fires, the Fire and Rescue
 3 Service would be expected to respond within minutes?
 4 A. Yes, sir.
 5 Q. And here, as you will certainly know, the first
 6 appliance arrived on Station Approach at 00.37, 2 hours
 7 and 6 minutes after the explosion, and 2 hours and
 8 3 minutes after North West Fire Control was notified.
 9 And even then, the firefighters didn't enter the station
 10 because they didn't do so until 00.50, and even that was
 11 despite and not because of it. That was 2 hours and
 12 19 minutes after the explosion and 2 hours and
 13 16 minutes after North West Fire Control first knew
 14 about it.
 15 To your mind, does that represent not just a failure
 16 in response but a gross failure in response?
 17 A. It does, sir.
 18 Q. Where do you think that responsibility for that gross
 19 failure rests?
 20 A. I don't think there's any one single point of failure.
 21 There are a number of issues that arose. There was the
 22 decision within North West Fire Control to select the
 23 bomb action card as opposed to the explosion action
 24 card, which prompted a set of actions. Then having been
 25 notified of an RVP, not having responded to that RVP,

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1 declaring a different RVP.
 2 There are communication issues, clearly, between all
 3 of the emergency services on the night that contributed
 4 to all of that failure. And then I suggest some inertia
 5 and concern amongst officers on the night as to what
 6 they might actually do to overcome that communication
 7 block, to actually get some kind of ground truth as to
 8 what was going on and then be able to deploy.
 9 Q. By inertia amongst officers, are you talking about
 10 inertia amongst firefighters?
 11 A. No, no.
 12 Q. Who are you talking about?
 13 A. I'm talking about — and there are reasons why people
 14 made the decisions they made on the night. I'm
 15 genuinely not trying to point a finger of blame. The
 16 NILOs seemed to be stuck in a loop of trying to get
 17 information from the force duty officer instead of
 18 potentially exploring other avenues for getting
 19 information.
 20 Q. That's an issue I'm going to come back to.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You've been asked for your opinion,
 22 perfectly reasonably, about it, but presumably
 23 you haven't done yourself, or have you, a detailed
 24 examination into what went wrong? Or just out of your
 25 own interest?

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1 A. Out of my own interest, I had a look subsequently at
 2 logs and other things, but I think through the course of
 3 this inquiry, there's still information coming out now
 4 that wasn't available to organisations at the time.

5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think one thing you ought to know
 6 is that although it was NWFC's initial case that the
 7 bomb action card was followed, that is not now their
 8 evidence. What they say they did was not go down an
 9 action card line at all, but consult the NILO because
 10 they generally didn't know what to do.

11 MR GREANEY: I am going to ask --

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry.

13 MR GREANEY: It's important that the witness should know
 14 that. What I'm seeking is your perspective, not as an
 15 expert, but as someone who was there on the night, about
 16 what went wrong, given your acceptance that there was
 17 a gross failure, and we will get to the call that was
 18 made by North West Fire Control very soon indeed.

19 It sounds from what you have said as if you would
 20 agree with what I think all witnesses who have been
 21 asked about it have agreed with, that that night JESIP
 22 didn't work?

23 A. No, it didn't.

24 Q. In fact there was a total failure of JESIP working?

25 A. Yes, that's correct.

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1 Q. So again, I'm just going to seek to capture your views
 2 bearing in mind your senior position at the time and
 3 your knowledge of these events. In principle, is JESIP,
 4 do you consider, a good idea?

5 A. Yes. The principles are, I believe, sound.

6 Q. And yet on this night, the night when it was
 7 particularly important it should work, it didn't. What
 8 in your view can be done to ensure JESIP works in
 9 future?

10 A. I think one possible way forward with it is that there
 11 was -- and I've seen from some of the evidence, forgive
 12 me if I'm jumping about a little bit -- that there was
 13 no thought to contact the NWS NILO or vice versa and
 14 stuck in a loop of trying to contact the force duty
 15 officer to get information to enable the deployment.

16 There is the possibility -- a cadre of officers who
 17 actually have knowledge of other organisations and how
 18 they deal with different types of incidents seems sound
 19 and I think that is what having a cadre of NILOs is in
 20 part trying to achieve. But also to overcome some of
 21 that blockage around communication, there is the
 22 possibility of actually, whatever shift it is on,
 23 whichever is the nominated NILO, FDO, NWS NILO, they
 24 could be co-located in the same building.

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I'm aware of the emphasis on

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1 co-location. It just seems quite surprising in this age
 2 of communications where we don't actually have to be
 3 next door to each other in order to communicate.

4 A. And sometimes -- I accept that in this technological age
 5 that shouldn't necessarily need to happen. But we've
 6 talked about it in the context that -- we talked about
 7 it in the context of not this incident but just joint
 8 working with other agencies, where we should be able to
 9 remotely joint work with other agencies. For example in
 10 my prevention role with building control officers,
 11 there's actually no -- in reality, there's no substitute
 12 for being in the same room and being able to look over
 13 the top of a computer screen and say, "What do you think
 14 about this?"

15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.

16 MR GREANEY: I'm going to move on to two other discrete
 17 topics before we get to your actions and involvement on
 18 the night of the 22nd.

19 The first of those issues is Exercise
 20 Winchester Accord. Were you yourself involved in
 21 Exercise Winchester Accord?

22 A. No, not personally. My department had a kind of
 23 a tangential involvement in it, in that volunteering for
 24 the Fire and Rescue Service sat within my directorate
 25 and we provided volunteers to act as casualties as part

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1 of Winchester Accord.

2 Q. But you did become aware, I think, of what had fallen
 3 out of Winchester Accord?

4 A. Certainly I became aware of a number of issues that
 5 happened at that time, but it was a significant time
 6 after Winchester Accord actually took place.

7 Q. Did you become aware of the issues that had fallen out
 8 of it before the arena attack or after?

9 A. I think it was before.

10 Q. Let me read to you what you said in your witness
 11 statement about this. Paragraph 93, page 22:

12 "I was not involved in Exercise Winchester Accord in
 13 2016 but I am aware that this exercise had established
 14 concerns around communications between GMP and other
 15 blue light responders. Ultimately, whilst I accept that
 16 the police were responding to a difficult incident, it
 17 was the responsibility of the force duty officer to
 18 ensure that communications were in hand. I completely
 19 accept that the force duty officer would have been
 20 overwhelmed."

21 Then you say this, which I'm keen to ask you further
 22 questions about:

23 "However, it is frustrating that the lessons from
 24 Winchester Accord were not addressed prior to the arena
 25 attack so as to ensure that the force duty officer had

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1 sufficient support to enable effective channels of
2 communication. Addressing these matters would not have
3 been the sole responsibility of GMP but should have been
4 addressed through the Greater Manchester Resilience
5 Forum."

6 So would you help us, please, with ---

7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, just before you ask that, I'm
8 really sorry. The second sentence of that, which
9 starts:

10 "Ultimately, while I accept the police were
11 responding to a difficult incident ..."

12 Which incident are you talking about?

13 A. I'm talking about the arena attack.

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. That's not immediately
15 apparent.

16 MR GREANEY: You're quite right, sir.

17 What do you consider should have been the role of
18 the Local Resilience Forum in learning the lessons of
19 Winchester Accord and implementing change?

20 A. As the Local Resilience Forum was a group that brought
21 together cat 1 and cat 2 responders to ensure that they
22 understood each other's issues and were able to respond
23 to incidents, it struck me that although I believed the
24 LRF doesn't have the ability to compel GMP or GMFRS or
25 anybody else to take part in particular ways, there was

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1 an opportunity there to gather up learning, not just
2 from Winchester Accord, but from all other multi-agency
3 exercises and to use that forum as a conduit to ensure
4 that the lessons had been learned and that other
5 organisations were aware of, (1), what the lessons were,
6 and (2), what had been done to rectify them.

7 Q. The second topic before we get to your involvement on
8 22 May relates to the involvement of one of your
9 colleagues. Are you aware that it was at 22.40 that
10 North West Fire Control called Station Manager Berry to
11 inform him that there had been an attack at the arena?

12 A. Yes, I am, sir.

13 Q. The principal aspects of that call are summarised in
14 a schedule that's been prepared by North West Fire
15 Control. We'll have the relevant entry on the screen,
16 please, Mr Lopez: {INQ041473/5}.

17 This is taking us to the point that the chairman was
18 informing you about. This will give you further
19 information. Are you in fact aware of the content of
20 that call at 22.40?

21 A. I have seen it before, yes.

22 Q. Let's nonetheless remind ourselves. {INQ041473/6},
23 please:

24 "We are receiving reports of an explosion at the
25 Manchester Evening News Arena. It's already detonated.

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1 The police that we've got on the line are saying it's
2 a bomb. There have been 30 casualties reported so far.
3 The rendezvous point at the moment is the car park
4 outside the cathedral. I've just phoned you while
5 we are still on to the police. Would it be all right
6 for you to get in touch with them?"

7 This is an important sentence that I'm going to ask
8 you about in a moment:

9 "Obviously we are not mobilising at the moment so
10 can you just speak to them and we'll hang fire?"

11 Berry:

12 "OK, so... what we restricting movements or what we
13 got a rendezvous point for the fire engines in the
14 area?"

15 Response from Fire Control:

16 "The car park outside the cathedral."

17 Berry:

18 "Right but we would normally muster them at one of
19 the stations, wouldn't we? ... so we could do that
20 first, we could get four pumps at one of the stations...
21 probably not that close, so we wouldn't want Central...
22 We might go for Philips Park or somewhere like that...
23 Well, we will do. We'll go for Philips Park."

24 Then Fire Control:

25 "Right, okay, we can create an incident then."

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1 A number of questions arising out of that. First of
2 all, as the chairman has pointed out to you, the
3 situation was not one in which the Fire Control went to
4 their bomb action card, action plan or any other, but
5 instead they decided to consult the duty NILO. Do you
6 consider that it was reasonable or unreasonable for
7 North West Fire Control to take that step?

8 A. I think there's different information in there. There's
9 information about an explosion, it's already detonated,
10 and then on the line saying it's a bomb. My
11 interpretation of that would have been we've got a bomb
12 that's already exploded and my inclination would have
13 been to go to the explosion card.

14 Q. So the fact that you would have done a particular thing
15 if you had been in Fire Control is obviously helpful,
16 but the fact that you would have done something
17 different doesn't mean that what the Fire Control did
18 was unreasonable, do you agree?

19 A. I'm not suggesting it's unreasonable; I'm just giving an
20 opinion of what I would do.

21 Q. You're not saying it's unreasonable, you're in fact
22 I think saying it is reasonable albeit that your own
23 view would have been go to the explosion card?

24 A. Yes. As I said, there's conflicting information already
25 within that conversation about whether it's a bomb or an

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1 explosion, so I can understand why North West Fire
 2 Control wouldn't want to action a particular card.
 3 Q. Let's look at it from the other point of view, namely
 4 the position of the duty NILO. What would your reaction
 5 have been had you received that information?
 6 A. Certainly the bit around where Control say, "Obviously
 7 we've not mobilised" — it's disappeared off my screen.
 8 Q. "Obviously we're not mobilising."
 9 A. "Obviously we're not mobilising at the moment."
 10 My instinct at that point would have been to
 11 challenge as to why we're not mobilising at that
 12 particular moment because I would have been expecting
 13 a mobilisation.
 14 Q. Would you be expecting a mobilisation to the
 15 designated rendezvous point?
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. I think therefore your evidence is in line with all of
 18 those who have been asked to comment upon —
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Help me about this because obviously
 20 I have to think about these things as we go along. The
 21 cathedral car park is actually quite close to the arena.
 22 A. It is.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Would you, as the duty NILO, and it may
 24 be you're not in a position to answer this, so please
 25 tell me if you're not, be concerned of another explosion

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1 timed to go off when emergency services arrive? Is that
 2 something which would concern you and come into your
 3 mind or are you not able to answer that?
 4 A. There's always a consideration of a secondary device.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If you are the duty NILO, having heard
 6 the bomb has gone off, having a fair idea it's probably
 7 a terrorist, so you are concerned about a secondary
 8 device and you are concerned the cathedral car park may
 9 be just too close to the arena and you might be affected
 10 by a device, would you still do that?
 11 A. I think the issue for me around the cathedral car park
 12 is — you're correct, it is very close to the arena.
 13 But if somebody, if a terrorist is planning an attack —
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We need to be quite careful not to be
 15 giving terrorists advice, okay?
 16 A. Yes, I'll try not to do that.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Please don't.
 18 A. I would have anticipated that a terrorist would try to
 19 set off or locate a secondary device where they would
 20 anticipate that other resources might gather. I don't
 21 think that they would have expected other resources to
 22 gather as close to the arena.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 24 MR GREANEY: Let's look at it in this way and you'll tell me
 25 if there's any flaw in this analysis. If the police

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1 have given a designated rendezvous point, would it in
 2 your view be safe to assume that they had decided that
 3 that was a safe place to rendezvous?
 4 A. I'd make that assumption, yes.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You need to know — I'm not
 6 contradicting the question or the proposition. I'm
 7 just — you need to know some more information. The FDO
 8 is the person who's meant to be running this whole
 9 operation. The RVP at the cathedral car park is not
 10 actually an RVP selected or even approved, as
 11 I understand it, by the FDO. It comes from an officer
 12 on the scene. As it happens it would have been
 13 perfectly safe. Knowing that about the RVP, would you
 14 nevertheless think that's fine when not even the FDO
 15 running the operation has had a chance to consider it?
 16 A. I think if you have an officer on the ground, who is
 17 making a dynamic assessment of what is actually going on
 18 at that scene, and they are nominating an RVP, I think
 19 it's reasonable to assume that it's a safe RVP.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's fair enough.
 21 A. I do also understand that there was a potential later on
 22 for a secondary device to be around the cathedral, there
 23 was some information later on to —
 24 MR GREANEY: Much, much later there was, and there was in
 25 fact a controlled detonation in that area. We have now

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1 captured your view so that we can inform the chairman,
 2 if needs be, that you, if it had been your decision,
 3 would have deployed to the cathedral car park.
 4 Sir, unless you have further questions —
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I have one more. The phrase:
 6 "We would normally muster at one of the stations
 7 wouldn't we?"
 8 And again, if it's not part of your expertise to
 9 deal with, then don't please help us, but would you
 10 normally muster at a station?
 11 A. I think for an unexploded bomb, we would normally muster
 12 at a station.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Thank you.
 14 MR GREANEY: So let's turn to your involvement on 22 May.
 15 On the night of 22 May, were you on duty?
 16 A. No, sir, I wasn't.
 17 Q. Can I be clear that in the questions I next ask, I am
 18 not seeking from you any personal information about your
 19 health or about anything else, or at least any detail of
 20 that. On 22 May, were you off sick?
 21 A. No, I wasn't, sir.
 22 Q. Were you subject to some form of different duty scheme
 23 than would have been normal?
 24 A. Yes, I was, sir.
 25 Q. Are you able to explain what that was to us in general

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1 terms without going into your personal circumstances?
 2 A. I am happy to give whatever detail the inquiry requires
 3 about that.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It doesn't require any detail
 5 particularly .
 6 MR GREANEY: Just a summary, I think, and then to understand
 7 whether whatever was different had any impact upon your
 8 ability to perform your duties that night.
 9 A. Okay. Prior to the incident at the arena, I'd failed
 10 a periodic medical for the service. I had passed all
 11 aspects it was other than a physical fitness test.
 12 I had a conversation with my line manager, who was
 13 Paul Argyle at the time, immediately after failing that
 14 physical fitness test. Essentially, the discussion was
 15 that some Fire and Rescue Services have a different
 16 fitness standard for operational firefighters and for
 17 flexible duty officers, and should we within GMFRS apply
 18 that different standard and keep me on the operational
 19 rota or the principal officer rota, or should we apply
 20 a single standard across the organisation. We agreed to
 21 apply a single standard across the organisation so the
 22 level of fitness required of me was the same as
 23 a firefighter and as a consequence of that, unless
 24 I passed that test, I wasn't able to perform the role of
 25 a principal officer. It didn't mean that I couldn't

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1 respond to an incident, I just couldn't take charge of
 2 an incident.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 4 MR GREANEY: Did any of that have any impact upon your
 5 ability to perform a role on the night of the arena
 6 attack?
 7 A. No, sir.
 8 Q. So to your mind, is that a matter of irrelevance?
 9 A. It is, sir.
 10 Q. On the night of 22 May, were you at home?
 11 A. Yes, sir, I was.
 12 Q. Awake or asleep?
 13 A. I was awake.
 14 Q. Was there at that time a principal officer WhatsApp
 15 group of which you were a member?
 16 A. Yes, there was.
 17 Q. Through a message posted by Assistant Chief Fire Officer
 18 Keelan, did you become aware at 23.11 that something had
 19 occurred at the arena?
 20 A. Yes, I did, sir.
 21 Q. At 23.14, did you see a message from Mr O'Reilly, the
 22 CFO, that he was on his way to the CSR?
 23 A. Yes, I did, sir.
 24 Q. We'll just see those on the screen. {INQ040019/1}.
 25 Is that at the top of the screen, 23.11, the message

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1 that alerted you to the fact that something was
 2 occurring?
 3 A. Yes, it is.
 4 Q. Did you see it at 23.11 or shortly thereafter?
 5 A. Yes, it would have been there or thereabouts.
 6 Q. And that message, 23.14, from Mr O'Reilly:
 7 "On way to command room. Early reports not good."
 8 And Mr Argyle expresses the hope that it will be
 9 a false alarm.
 10 A. Yes, sir.
 11 Q. That can go from the screen.
 12 Did you at that stage respond?
 13 A. No, I didn't, sir.
 14 Q. Did you, whilst at home, have the ability to access the
 15 log of North West Fire Control?
 16 A. I could have done if I'd chosen to, but I didn't.
 17 Q. From the senior fire officers that we've heard from so
 18 far, it was not the reaction of any of them to go on to
 19 the log. What I was going to ask you was whether you
 20 can account for that.
 21 A. Frankly, whenever I've been mobilised to an incident
 22 in the past, it wouldn't be my automatic reaction to log
 23 on and view the incident log. I would get ready, get in
 24 my car and phone Control or whoever else — it might be
 25 the assistant principal officer, the duty GM — to get

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1 information from them rather than from the incident log.
 2 It takes few minutes —
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I can understand it if you're mobilised
 4 because presumably you're being told to get there as
 5 soon as you can because it's an emergency.
 6 A. Yes.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If you're a senior officer who's just
 8 being informed — I'm not particularly talking about you
 9 in this case, but other officers who just get the
 10 information about what is happening and then decide to,
 11 as it were, volunteer, why don't they go on to the
 12 incident log?
 13 A. Obviously I can't speak for other officers but it just
 14 wouldn't be my first instinct to do that.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just wonder if it's the culture of
 16 fire officers: there's a fire, there's an emergency, we
 17 get there (overspeaking) —
 18 A. If I were to view the incident logs, I would anticipate
 19 doing that in the command support room rather than doing
 20 it at home.
 21 MR GREANEY: Sir, you've identified exactly the issue I was
 22 going to seek your views on, whether there is some
 23 cultural issue which means that senior fire officers on
 24 being informed of an incident do not go to the log which
 25 might be something they'd be expected to do.

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1 A. I think you'll obviously have seen some of the logs and
 2 some of the logs are actually quite difficult to work
 3 through and get information from and it is not always
 4 obvious --
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That doesn't help, does it, then?
 6 A. It doesn't but again for me, for example, to log on via
 7 my work--provided laptop would have taken me a few
 8 minutes to log on. Remote access then into the system
 9 could have taken a few minutes. I would have had to
 10 have contacted somebody to get the right incident number
 11 to have logged on so I would have to have been ringing
 12 people, anyone, to get that kind of information to get
 13 the correct log. So although -- forgive me, I can
 14 actually search incidents and find different incident
 15 numbers on the system but all of that then builds up and
 16 takes a considerable period of time. Whereas those --
 17 in the same way as I said earlier on, about different
 18 organisations being able to look over the top of a PC
 19 and talk to each other, it's actually simpler to pick up
 20 a phone and speak to somebody else.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We all have to use computers now.
 22 You're retired, so you don't particularly, but I'm sure
 23 you do and perhaps we find that those who are rather
 24 younger than you and I might be actually do it rather
 25 more easily and are more adept at dealing with

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1 computers.
 2 A. I think that might be part of the case, but in all
 3 honesty, logging on remotely from home into work
 4 systems, it may well be a lot better now, it wasn't
 5 always the simplest thing.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 7 MR GREANEY: It sounds like there were two reasons why it
 8 wasn't your practice as it wasn't the practice of
 9 others: one, the amount of time it would take to
 10 actually get to the log; and secondly, that when you get
 11 to the log, it isn't always as easy to navigate as you
 12 would want?
 13 A. Yes. You'd need scroll through and there would be lots
 14 of things that are on a log that are actually
 15 irrelevant.
 16 Q. What you did do, I think, is, whilst remaining at home,
 17 to switch on the television and tune into Sky News?
 18 A. Yes, I did.
 19 Q. Did you quickly identify from footage you saw that there
 20 were at the scene both police officers and paramedics?
 21 A. Yes, I did.
 22 Q. And did you assume that the Fire and Rescue Service
 23 would also be at the scene?
 24 A. Yes, just because I couldn't see them on the screen
 25 didn't mean they weren't there.

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1 Q. After all, is it fair to conclude that if police were
 2 at the scene, if ambulance are at the scene, there isn't
 3 likely to be any good reason why the Fire and Rescue
 4 Service should also not be at the scene?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. And the reality from what you have said is they should
 7 have been there, shouldn't they?
 8 A. Yes, they should.
 9 Q. So do you agree that one of the perhaps surprising
 10 aspects of that night is that, at home, watching
 11 Sky News, you gained situational awareness that the
 12 NILOs didn't obtain until much later?
 13 A. I think certainly I could see that two other emergency
 14 services were present at the scene and I would have
 15 anticipated that the NILOs, wherever they were, would be
 16 aware that organisations were already in attendance
 17 at the scene.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Greaney, help me with the timing.
 19 Sorry to be vague. By this time, are casualties
 20 actually moving down the stairs?
 21 MR GREANEY: Yes, by this time.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I have seen some TV footage where you
 23 can actually see, because of where the cameras are, that
 24 people are being brought down the stairs on makeshift
 25 stretchers. Did you see that?

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1 A. I think I did.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you know very well, that's
 3 a particular area where the Fire Service can help a lot?
 4 A. Yes, they could have helped a lot in that regard, but
 5 seeing that on the screen doesn't mean that the Fire and
 6 Rescue Service weren't in attendance from my
 7 perspective.
 8 MR GREANEY: As you have made plain, you assumed they were
 9 there because they should have been there. But what
 10 I think you're agreeing with is that the fact that you
 11 were able, sitting on your sofa, to gain situational
 12 awareness that the NILOs didn't have is indicative that
 13 something had gone badly wrong?
 14 A. I would have expected the NILOs to have the same
 15 awareness that I had. Every station's got a TV in it.
 16 Q. We know, the inquiry knows, and I'm certain you will
 17 know, that the duty NILO had had difficulty contacting
 18 the force duty officer.
 19 A. Yes, I'm aware of that.
 20 Q. And you used a phrase earlier that I can't quite bring
 21 to mind, but you spoke about the circularity of this,
 22 that they got trapped in a circle.
 23 A. Yes. It appeared to me that they got caught in a loop
 24 trying to contact the force duty officer.
 25 Q. And that they didn't think further about how to get

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1 information given that difficulty or sufficiently
 2 further?
 3 A. I think they may well have thought about other avenues,
 4 but chose at that point not to explore them whilst they
 5 were still trying to contact the FDO.
 6 Q. Is it your view that in the event of a difficulty in
 7 contacting the FDO, at the very least someone ought to
 8 have gone to the scene?
 9 A. It's my view, in the absence of any kind of situational
 10 awareness, it's not unreasonable to either send an
 11 appliance or just a single flexible duty officer to the
 12 scene to get some situational awareness.
 13 Q. You have used a phrase not unreasonable. What I'm
 14 inviting you to agree with, if it is your view, is
 15 in the absence of situational awareness being gained
 16 from the FDO, someone should have gone to the scene?
 17 A. I would have expected somebody to.
 18 Q. Just to pick up the chronology, at 23.26, did you post
 19 to the WhatsApp group that we've referred to a message
 20 that you were available to help?
 21 A. Yes, I did.
 22 Q. Then at 23.52, did the chief fire officer send you
 23 a message, asking you to go to the CSR?
 24 A. Yes, he did, sir.
 25 Q. The message didn't tell you why, but did you have

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1 yourself an understanding of why the CFO wanted you to
 2 go to the CSR?
 3 A. No. There was no clarification as to that. However,
 4 there was only — in terms of principal officers there
 5 was only Peter O'Reilly, Dave Keelan and myself in the
 6 organisation; Paul Argyle was out of the country.
 7 I live less than 2 miles away from our service
 8 headquarters, which is where the CSR is, so it would
 9 have been very more easy for me to get there than for
 10 Dave Keelan to get there.
 11 Q. Were you and Mr O'Reilly close professional colleagues?
 12 A. Yes, I'd say so.
 13 Q. And were you friendly outside of work?
 14 A. Yes, we were, sir. As was Mr Keelan.
 15 Q. In other words, you were friends, the two of you?
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. Did you think at the time that one of the reasons he
 18 wanted you to go to the CSR was because of that
 19 friendship?
 20 A. No, I don't think so. There were other instances, other
 21 incidents, where he had asked me to come to the CSR or
 22 that I'd attended and he was present. Examples being
 23 the incident where Stephen Hunt died at a fire in the
 24 city centre, where he asked me to join him in the CSR —
 25 or asked me to go to the CSR, sorry: he went directly to

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1 the incident and I went to the CSR. And another example
 2 is quite some time ago, but the Manchester and Salford
 3 riots where I joined him in — although we didn't have
 4 a CSR at that time, it was in the same room where the
 5 CSR currently exists that we operated from at
 6 headquarters.
 7 Q. Are you aware that questions have been asked of other
 8 witnesses from GMFRS about the personality of
 9 Mr O'Reilly and his management style?
 10 A. Yes, I am.
 11 Q. So I am going to ask you for your view as someone who
 12 was a close professional colleague and also a friend of
 13 his. In work, was Mr O'Reilly a bully?
 14 A. No, sir, not at all.
 15 Q. Was he an intimidating presence in a discussion?
 16 A. No, sir, but I can understand why some people may have
 17 felt intimidated by him.
 18 Q. Could you explain why, please?
 19 A. This is feedback that I had given to Mr O'Reilly myself
 20 previously in that when he presents —
 21 Q. Previously before the attack?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. Sorry, I interrupted. You carry on.
 24 A. When he presents a proposal, he's clearly thought
 25 a proposal through very thoroughly before he presents it

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1 to anybody, and he then supports his proposal with a lot
 2 of information to substantiate why that is potentially
 3 a good thing to do. And confronted with that, there are
 4 some people who feel overwhelmed by the volume of
 5 information that he's actually providing, aren't able to
 6 process it quickly enough to challenge or respond to him
 7 at that time, or who feel that that's such a, for want
 8 of a better way of expressing it, there's such
 9 a complete response that there is no challenge to give
 10 to it.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I just wonder about what you
 12 said, intimidating. You said he is not an intimidating
 13 presence but he could appear that way. So objectively,
 14 to some people, he may appear intimidating?
 15 A. I think what I said, sir, was that I can understand why
 16 some people would feel intimidated by him and I think
 17 because of —
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That may be the same thing I said
 19 (overspeaking) —
 20 A. Sorry, it's just me picking up (overspeaking) —
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — objectively, they are intimidated.
 22 A. If somebody feels intimidated, they are intimidated.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you're saying people could feel
 24 intimidated by him?
 25 A. I think some people could have done, yes.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What you're saying is he never intended
2 to be intimidating?
3 A. No.
4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, right.
5 MR GREANEY: I suppose some people will be intimidated by a
6 volume of material, but when we think about a person who
7 is intimidating, more generally we're thinking about
8 something about their personality that makes other feels
9 intimidated?
10 A. Yes, I generally take — somebody describing somebody
11 else as being intimidated, I would interpret that as
12 somebody who is aggressive rather than what I've
13 described.
14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Forceful? Is he forceful?
15 A. He can be at times, yes. I think there's also to be
16 understood that the Fire and Rescue Service is not on
17 its own, it's a hierarchical organisation, and there are
18 those within that hierarchy who are happy, content, to
19 challenge a chief and there are those that will not
20 challenge.
21 MR GREANEY: Another word that witnesses have been asked to
22 consider is autocratic. Would that be a description
23 that you would agree with of Mr O'Reilly's management
24 style?
25 A. Not at all. I would say that from him coming into the

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1 organisation, when he came into the organisation as an
2 assistant chief and then was promoted to chief officer,
3 there was, and I think it's been described in somebody
4 else's evidence, there was a fear amongst — potentially
5 a fear amongst some officers, particularly firefighters
6 and rank and file officers, that they might want to ask
7 a question of a very senior officer but the only way you
8 could do that was to pass that information and that
9 question, whatever, through a chain of command, and some
10 people didn't feel that what they were actually asking
11 ended up being the question that got asked, if it was
12 asked at all, and any response that came back down
13 actually got filtered.
14 One thing Mr O'Reilly was very, very keen to
15 introduce and did introduce was the ability of anybody
16 within the organisation, it didn't matter whether
17 frankly they were a cleaner, a firefighter, anybody,
18 could ask a question directly of a corporate leadership
19 team member, including the chief, and they could do that
20 either privately or they could do that openly.
21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Greaney, there's a phrase which
22 I have now forgotten, democratic on the... but
23 autocratic somewhere else.
24 MR GREANEY: I don't remember that at all, I am afraid.
25 MR WARNOCK: If I remember, it was autocratic on the fire

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1 ground.
2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think the impression was that it was
3 democratic when you were talking about things in an
4 ordinary sense, but once you're there doing the job,
5 it's autocratic.
6 A. Certainly there is a difference between day-to-day
7 management and command in an incident command sense.
8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sure someone will tell us instantly
9 about the phrase.
10 MR GREANEY: I'm sure that someone will let us know before
11 I finish my questioning and then we can return to it.
12 At all events, you've given us your view about the
13 personally of Mr O'Reilly. I dare say you'll be asked
14 further questions by others in due course about that,
15 but let's return to the chronology.
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do you find it difficult to answer the
17 questions because of your friendship with him?
18 A. No, not at all, sir.
19 MR GREANEY: Do you remain a friend of his?
20 A. We are still occasionally in touch, although it's
21 obviously not as often as we used to be.
22 Q. When were you last in touch with him?
23 A. It was actually last night.
24 Q. What was the nature of your discussion last night?
25 A. Football.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Was it not mentioned that you were
2 coming here tomorrow? There's no reason why it
3 shouldn't have been.
4 A. I assumed he would know, not specifically the date but
5 there is an update circulated by Lee Bourne every week
6 which says which witnesses are going to be appearing the
7 following week, so I took it that he understood I was
8 coming anyway.
9 MR GREANEY: I will ask you, because inevitably otherwise
10 you'll be asked by someone else, did the two of you
11 discuss the fact that you were coming here to give
12 evidence today?
13 A. He knew I was coming but we didn't discuss any evidence
14 whatsoever.
15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, a bit more detail. There has
16 been some evidence that could be described as critical
17 of Mr O'Reilly and indeed of you. Have you discussed
18 that?
19 A. No, sir.
20 MR GREANEY: Let's pick up on the events of that night.
21 As you have told us, you didn't live very far away
22 and as a result you were able to arrive at the CSR at
23 00.07.
24 A. Yes, sir.
25 Q. I think from what you have already told us, as you

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1 arrived, you thought you were coming into a situation in
 2 which the Fire and Rescue Service would already be
 3 engaged at the scene?
 4 A. Yes, sir.
 5 Q. When you arrived, were the following persons already
 6 present: the chief fire officer?
 7 A. Yes, he was in the ER hub office adjacent to the CSR.
 8 Q. Group Manager Nankivell, the duty group manager?
 9 A. Yes, sir.
 10 Q. Was Group Manager Fletcher there?
 11 A. Yes, he was.
 12 Q. What did you understand his role was in the CSR?
 13 A. I didn't know what his role was.
 14 Q. Did you at any stage that night discover what his role
 15 was within the CSR?
 16 A. I think it was similar to mine, an extra pair of hands,
 17 although he did have specialist knowledge around NILOs
 18 and MTFA.
 19 Q. Was Robert Lafferty of the support team also present?
 20 A. Yes, he was, sir.
 21 Q. As you've told us, your expectation was that you would
 22 be an extra pair of hands. In the result, did you get
 23 in the way of those who were providing support?
 24 A. I don't believe that I did, no, sir.
 25 Q. Are you aware that a phrase that was used by

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1 Mr Nankivell was that you "interfered with play"?
 2 A. I'm aware of that, yes, sir.
 3 Q. And do you agree that that's what you did?
 4 A. No, I don't, sir.
 5 Q. What contribution do you consider you did make to what
 6 occurred in the CSR or, to look at it another way, what
 7 value did you add to their work?
 8 A. I took a role which is essentially — when I first got
 9 there, I got a briefing from Mr Nankivell and
 10 Mr Fletcher, which they hadn't completed by the time
 11 that Mr O'Reilly came back into the room.
 12 Q. They hadn't completed?
 13 A. They hadn't completed that. I took my role from there
 14 as to be listening to what was being said, both what
 15 I could hear on radio talk channels, what I could hear
 16 on conversations within the command support room itself,
 17 and then if needed, offering advice and support to those
 18 officers in the command support room to actually deal
 19 with the issues that they were being asked to deal with.
 20 Q. That's a description of what you — what value you hoped
 21 to provide. In the result, what value did you add to
 22 what happened in the command support room that night?
 23 A. I think the reality is I probably didn't contribute in
 24 any significant way to the resolution of the incident.
 25 Q. You told us that you received a briefing upon arrival

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1 from Mr Nankivell and Mr Fletcher. In case anyone is
 2 following this, it's paragraphs 58 and 59 of your
 3 statement. What did they brief you in the course of
 4 that discussion?
 5 A. Essentially, they were telling me that appliances —
 6 there are four appliances that they had actually been at
 7 a rendezvous point at Philips Park Fire Station and that
 8 they'd subsequently — sorry, there were also three
 9 NILOs in Andy Berry, Carlos Meakin and Ben Levy. And
 10 they subsequently moved the RVP from Philips Park to
 11 Manchester Central. I think that's about as far as we'd
 12 actually got when Mr O'Reilly came back into the room.
 13 Q. So what were your immediate thoughts on being told that
 14 information?
 15 A. Initially, why weren't we actually at the scene? So as
 16 I say, walking into the room, I was expecting us to have
 17 some kind of significant presence at the scene, and it
 18 just struck me as a little odd that we had three NILOs
 19 involved.
 20 Q. Thank you very much. Sir, the phrase that you were
 21 searching for is as follows, and it was Neil Helmrich
 22 who gave evidence on Day 70 of the oral evidence
 23 hearings:
 24 "We're a hierarchical organisation but when it comes
 25 to the fire ground, we are autocratic, and when we're on

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1 the fire station, we are democratic."
 2 I think, sir, you did in fact recall the quotation
 3 accurately.
 4 Do you agree with that?
 5 A. I think largely speaking, that's true, yes.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. Thank you very much, whoever
 7 found that.
 8 MR GREANEY: Obviously, I'm going to turn in just a moment
 9 to whether there was much democracy in the debate about
 10 which resources to send to the scene.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Amazing what a word search can do!
 12 MR GREANEY: I'm also grateful to whoever found it.
 13 So that was the briefing that you were given. What
 14 we know of the position, and some of this you were told
 15 at that time, is the following, that resources,
 16 including specialist resources, were by that stage, at
 17 about 00.10, at Manchester Central. They were under the
 18 command of Ben Levy and they were ready to deploy to the
 19 scene.
 20 And no doubt at that stage, if you had been told
 21 that, you would agree that you would have agreed it was
 22 appropriate to deploy to the scene?
 23 A. The only thing I would slightly correct there is I don't
 24 think at that point I knew that Ben Levy was the
 25 incident commander.

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1 Q. I understand that, but I'm telling you what we know.
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. He was in command at that stage and he was ready to
 4 deploy with his specialist and non-specialist resources
 5 to the scene.
 6 Almost as soon as you'd arrived, the chief made
 7 a telephone call to Steve Hynes of NWAS. Was he someone
 8 that you knew?
 9 A. Steve Hynes was, and my understanding is that the chief
 10 was already on that phone call. As I walked into the
 11 command support room, the chief fire officer was in the
 12 ER hub office on the phone and it's my understanding
 13 that it was Steve Hynes he was on the phone to at that
 14 time.
 15 Q. If that's right, that would place your arrival in the
 16 CSR a little later than you indicated earlier because
 17 the call that the chief fire officer made to Steve Hynes
 18 was made at 00.12 and it lasted for 2 minutes and
 19 13 seconds.
 20 Do you agree with other witnesses that almost as
 21 soon as that call ended, it was discovered within the
 22 CSR that Plato had been declared by Greater Manchester
 23 Police?
 24 A. Yes, it was around that time, I think it was 00.19 when
 25 we were informed of Op Plato being declared.

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1 Q. Did what I will describe at the moment as a debate
 2 thereafter ensue between those in the CSR?
 3 A. I think that in terms of the chronology, I think the
 4 conversation around mobilising resources actually
 5 happened or was happening before we heard Op Plato.
 6 Q. Did it then continue in the light of the information
 7 that Plato had been declared?
 8 A. There was still a conversation that went on, yes.
 9 Q. And I've described it as a debate, you have perhaps
 10 downgraded it to a conversation. Are we talking in
 11 reality about an argument that was occurring within that
 12 room?
 13 A. I think there was a challenge being made to the chief as
 14 to what resources to mobilise. I've heard it described
 15 as being angry. I don't recall any angry conversations
 16 in the CSR that night.
 17 Q. Let's take it in stages and capture your evidence about
 18 it. First of all, were there two sides to this
 19 discussion?
 20 A. Yes, there were.
 21 Q. On the one side of the debate, did we have Mr Levy,
 22 Mr Nankivell, Mr Etches and Mr Fletcher?
 23 A. Yes, sir.
 24 Q. And was their view that what needed to be deployed to
 25 the scene, in particular once it was known Plato had

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1 been declared, were both the specialist and
 2 non-specialist resources?
 3 A. Yes, sir, that was their view.
 4 Q. And on the other side of the discussion was the view of
 5 the chief fire officer. What was his view?
 6 A. His view was that, having spoken to Steve Hynes, who was
 7 actually at the scene, and having clarified with him
 8 whether or not MTFA and ballistic protection was
 9 required and what skills Steve Hynes required at the
 10 scene, we should be mobilising, for want of a better
 11 phrase, standard firefighters rather than the SRT.
 12 Q. What he was advocating was mobilising the resources that
 13 would be mobilised to a house fire?
 14 A. Yes, sir, the same level of resource, as that -- that's
 15 what in essence -- not in essence -- that is what
 16 Steve Hynes had requested.
 17 Q. We're going to get to the reasons in a moment, but did
 18 you weigh in on either side of the discussion?
 19 A. Weigh in is putting it strongly. Certainly I was part
 20 of the conversation and I supported the chief's view
 21 around sending standard firefighters.
 22 Q. I'm going to put three propositions to you and see
 23 whether you agree with all or any of them.
 24 Proposition 1 is that it was sensible for specialist
 25 resources to deploy to a situation in which there were

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1 still many casualties there because they had the skills,
 2 experience and expertise to give the greatest
 3 assistance.
 4 Proposition 2: on the face of it, an officer of NWAS
 5 was determining a deployment decision of GMFRS.
 6 Proposition 3: what was happening was, contrary to
 7 guidance, those in the CSR who were there to support
 8 were countermanding the decisions of the commander.
 9 Those are three propositions that we've been
 10 exploring. Do you agree with any or all of them?
 11 A. In terms of the first proposition -- sorry, you might
 12 have to repeat some of them -- I think it was
 13 appropriate given the information that we had from an
 14 on-scene Bronze commander from NWAS as to what resources
 15 and what assistance he needed, he felt he needed, that
 16 it was appropriate to send what he had asked for as
 17 opposed to what was necessarily available at the RVP.
 18 Part of the reasoning for that was that Steve
 19 Hynes -- and it probably wouldn't have been known to the
 20 other people in the room, Ben Levy, Carlos Meakin, or to
 21 Andy Berry, but Steve Hynes had a very, very good
 22 knowledge of Fire and Rescue Service capabilities, what
 23 we could, what we couldn't do, about the SRT, about
 24 trauma technicians. He knew all about that as part of
 25 the previous work that we'd done in relation to the

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1 response to cardiac arrests and then development of what
 2 became known as a survival academy.
 3 Q. There had been at one stage within Greater Manchester
 4 a scheme that I think was being developed so that
 5 firefighters would be able to treat, for example,
 6 a cardiac arrest?
 7 A. Yes, for a period of time we were able to actually
 8 mobilise fire engines with firefighters alongside NWS
 9 ambulances to treat cardiac arrest victims.
 10 Q. And the point you're making is that Steve Hynes was
 11 a part of that programme?
 12 A. Yes, he led on that from an NWS perspective.
 13 Q. And that as a result, your understanding is that he had
 14 developed an understanding of the capabilities,
 15 specialist and non-specialist capabilities of the Fire
 16 and Rescue Service?
 17 A. As part of putting that in place, one of the
 18 reservations around putting it in place from an NWS
 19 perspective was meeting their clinical governance
 20 standards, so as part of the agreement that we
 21 eventually put in place they had to go into the
 22 organisation and audit all of our training around
 23 medical response.
 24 Q. So it is a perfectly, if I may say so, understandable
 25 point to make that he knew more about specialist

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1 resources than perhaps a standard paramedic.
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. But there within that room was Dean Nankivell, who had
 4 been there at the inception of the TRU, he had been
 5 there at the development of the SRT, he knew what the
 6 specialist resources could add in terms of a response to
 7 a terrorist incident.
 8 A. I think there is no doubt that the TRU/SRT had
 9 a capability above that of standard firefighters and
 10 fire appliances. But I still have the view that
 11 Steve Hynes, as an experienced and knowledgeable NWS
 12 commander, knew what resources he needed at the scene.
 13 Q. The first proposition was that it was sensible for
 14 specialist resources to attend because of the value they
 15 could add. And your response is that Mr Hynes was
 16 saying, "This is what I need", and he was somebody that
 17 could be relied upon?
 18 A. That's correct.
 19 Q. The second proposition was, on the face of it, what was
 20 happening was an officer of NWS was determining
 21 a decision that was a decision for the Fire and Rescue
 22 Service and your response to that?
 23 A. That's true. It's unusual in that sense, but two
 24 things: there was a number of things that happened that
 25 particular night that were unusual and, as I've said

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1 earlier on, this was the first time that we actually had
 2 any direct information from the scene.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think one can, say whether he's right
 4 or wrong, Mr O'Reilly was actually the man who made the
 5 deployment decision, maybe acting on what was suggested
 6 by Mr Hynes, but nevertheless he did actually make the
 7 decision.
 8 A. Yes, he did, sir.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right.
 10 MR GREANEY: He certainly didn't decide that they shouldn't
 11 be deployed. I think Mr Levy might have had something
 12 to say about who was the one deciding to deploy.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Which is your third point, I think, that
 14 it's for the incident commander rather than the chief to
 15 be making that decision.
 16 MR GREANEY: Let's turn to that third proposition, you're
 17 quite right. We looked yesterday and the day before
 18 about the guidance for the command support room and, no
 19 doubt, if necessary, we can get it on the screen again.
 20 But I hope I summarise the position accurately by saying
 21 that it is clear that those in the command support room
 22 support and that they are not the ones making command
 23 decisions, such decisions are for the incident
 24 commander. Here, the incident commander is Ben Levy,
 25 and yet on the face of it, contrary to guidance, his

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1 decisions are being countermanded by those in the CSR,
 2 who instead are making the decisions.
 3 A. From my understanding at that point, I wasn't aware that
 4 we had an incident commander at all. So I wasn't aware
 5 that Ben had declared himself as an incident commander.
 6 Even if I was aware, Ben was an incident commander who
 7 was not at the scene and our incident commanders would
 8 ordinarily be at the actual scene of an incident rather
 9 than at a rendezvous point, otherwise if you're remote
 10 from the scene, how are you able to make a dynamic
 11 assessment about what resource you actually require? So
 12 in that instance, deploying resources from information
 13 within the command support room did not seem
 14 unreasonable at all. And as I say, because I didn't
 15 know that Ben had declared himself as an incident
 16 commander, I don't see that, from my perspective, we
 17 weren't undermining him and we weren't aware.
 18 I certainly wasn't aware of any intention on the part of
 19 Ben at that point to actually deploy resource.
 20 Q. You weren't aware of that?
 21 A. No.
 22 Q. So in the view that you were forming in the command
 23 support room, you weren't aware that Mr Levy was of, to
 24 say the least, the very strong view that specialist and
 25 non-specialist resources should be deployed?

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1 A. I was aware that he felt we should deploy specialist
2 resources but I wasn't aware that he declared himself as
3 the incident commander.
4 Q. What did you think he was doing?
5 A. He had been requested as a NILO was my understanding.
6 Q. Who did you think was the incident commander?
7 A. It was my understanding at that point that there wasn't
8 an incident commander. We would only ordinarily, as
9 I say, have an incident commander at the scene.
10 Q. That was the problem, wasn't it, that it was by this
11 stage going on for 2 hours after the bomb had exploded
12 and you didn't have anyone at the scene?
13 A. Very much a problem.
14 Q. Anyway, let's finish off this point and there's one
15 further issue and I'll be finished with my questions.
16 Now that you look at this situation, do you hold
17 with the view that it is an appropriate state of affairs
18 that the specialist resources of Greater Manchester Fire
19 and Rescue Service never reached the arena at any stage?
20 A. No. We should have had an initial mobilisation as soon
21 as possible after the initial call in to North West Fire
22 Control, and that could have — excuse me, that response
23 could and should have included SRT. And with SRT on the
24 scene, it's my opinion that they would have had the
25 tools and equipment and, frankly, firefighters —

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1 I don't want to diminish their capabilities or their
2 role — but we would have added significantly to the
3 response.
4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Let me just — I have no doubt
5 this is something you're coming to and you'll forgive me
6 for taking it over. There is a perfectly good argument
7 that in the event the chief and you got it wrong and the
8 reason for that is that, despite knowing that Plato had
9 been declared, you took no account of the likely zoning,
10 so when they got there, these unprotected officers were
11 being asked to go into a warm zone which under your
12 rules, they are not allowed to do, and you had a
13 perfectly good body of people who were equipped to go
14 into a warm zone who you said not to deploy.
15 So they were not allowed to go in to start with and
16 it was only when the firefighters themselves disobeyed
17 what they were being told that they actually got in
18 there at all. As a result of that, doesn't it follow
19 that you and the chief were wrong?
20 A. There was no information about zoning at the incident
21 until some time later on.
22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You know Plato has been declared. Plato
23 has zoning. The bomb's gone off there, so there's bound
24 to be zoning. It's not the declaration of Plato that is
25 the major concern, it's the zoning and where you can go

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1 safely.
2 A. Yes, and frankly I would have anticipated, and still
3 would anticipate, that Steve Hynes would have an
4 understanding, did have an understanding, of our
5 capability and whether or not he was going to be asking
6 to deploy firefighters into a warm zone.
7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Isn't it the responsibility of you and
8 the chief to find out whether it's a warm zone? Because
9 what you actually did was send firefighters in who could
10 not properly be deployed into the area they were going
11 in to help. Your decision was wrong, wasn't it?
12 A. With hindsight, yes.
13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. But need it have been hindsight?
14 The answer is I suspect no because you should have found
15 out about zoning.
16 A. I accept that. However, there is still a difficulty,
17 even at this point, of getting information from GMP, and
18 it was ultimately from GMP that —
19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I am sorry, that won't do. You had
20 Mr Hynes there and he could easily have been asked: is
21 the area where you are asking us to help a warm zone?
22 A. He could have been asked that, yes.
23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, I'm sure you were coming to that.
24 MR GREANEY: I was, sir. That was shorter at any rate than
25 I was going to ask about.

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1 I'm certain you've got the point.
2 A. Yes, sir.
3 Q. That Plato had been declared and you knew it by that
4 stage?
5 A. Yes. Forgive me, there's still a conversation following
6 Plato being declared. We haven't physically at that
7 point — no resources have actually left
8 Manchester Central at that point, so that's completely
9 correct.
10 Q. Thank you very much. So Plato has been declared and
11 at the very least, that gives rise to the material
12 possibility that non-specialist resources are not going
13 to be able to deploy into some part of the scene,
14 doesn't it?
15 A. Yes, it gives rise to that possibility.
16 Q. And gives rise to the very real possibility that the
17 only resources of GMFRS that are going to be able to
18 deploy into a part of the scene are the specialist
19 resources?
20 A. Not necessarily. It could have been both resources.
21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But you're being deployed to an
22 Operation Plato scene. You have special people designed
23 to do that sort of thing and you say: no, no, don't
24 let's use the people who are meant to be doing it, let's
25 use the firefighters who aren't meant to do it.

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1 A. That was reliance on the information from Steve Hynes.
 2 I accept we could have asked him more questions.
 3 MR GREANEY: It's not a question of asking more questions.
 4 Can't you accept that in circumstances in which you and
 5 the chief knew that Plato had been declared, there was
 6 only one sensible decision, which was to deploy
 7 specialist resources alongside non-specialist resources?
 8 How can any other decision be justified on the basis of
 9 that fact?
 10 A. It would have been sensible.
 11 Q. No. How can any other decision be justified?
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You give the answer you want to. Could
 13 any other decision be justified?
 14 A. No.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 16 MR GREANEY: Sir, I'm moving on to my final topic.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sorry, that was a bit of a team
 18 effort. It's very unfair to have two people asking
 19 questions at the same time. That's my fault.
 20 MR GREANEY: Certainly, sir, you don't listen to anything
 21 I have to say, as you told everyone this morning.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I listen to your questions, although the
 23 answers are, of course, what matter.
 24 MR GREANEY: I'm moving on to my final topic. I'm not going
 25 to suggest that there weren't other matters and issues

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1 that you were involved in, but we're trying to focus in
 2 on those that are important.
 3 Did you become aware that the firefighters on the
 4 ground at Manchester Central Fire Station, G16, were
 5 unhappy?
 6 A. Yes, I did.
 7 Q. How did you become aware of that?
 8 A. I can't recall if it was either a direct conversation
 9 with Carlos Meakin or a conversation or information that
 10 came from Carlos into the command support room that was
 11 then relayed to me.
 12 Q. I think the phrase that was used was that the crews were
 13 "fizzing"?
 14 A. That's correct, sir.
 15 Q. And did you know at that stage why they were fizzing or
 16 might be?
 17 A. No, sir.
 18 Q. Did it not occur to you that they might be unhappy they
 19 hadn't been deployed?
 20 A. Yes, it was certainly a possibility.
 21 Q. Was a decision made about how that situation might be
 22 managed?
 23 A. Yes, I undertook to go and have a conversation with the
 24 crews at Manchester Central.
 25 Q. Did you do that?

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1 A. Yes, I did, sir.
 2 Q. Did you arrive at Manchester Central Fire Station at
 3 about 03.30?
 4 A. Yes, it was around that time.
 5 Q. And was Group Manager Carlos Meakin there?
 6 A. Yes, he was.
 7 Q. What did he explain to you before you spoke to the
 8 crews?
 9 A. I had a conversation -- I don't think it was just with
 10 Carlos, I think Andy Berry and Ben Levy were also either
 11 there or close by. I just wanted to try and get
 12 a little bit more of an in-depth understanding of
 13 exactly why firefighters were unhappy.
 14 Q. In summary, were you told that the crews were fuming?
 15 A. Yes, I was, sir.
 16 Q. Did you then speak or attempt to speak to the crews for
 17 a period of 10 to 15 minutes?
 18 A. Yes, I did, sir.
 19 Q. And was Group Manager Meakin's view that they were
 20 fuming accurate?
 21 A. Yes, it was.
 22 Q. What concerns were they raising with you?
 23 A. Well, obviously their lack of response on the night.
 24 They wanted to know who was in charge of the actual
 25 incident, what decisions had been made and why they'd

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1 been made. There was a brief discussion around not
 2 using SRT, why that wasn't actually used, and forgive
 3 me... There was a brief conversation around JESIP and
 4 how it had failed on the night.
 5 Q. The inquiry has heard evidence that you didn't really
 6 have any answers to these questions. Do you think
 7 that is a fair criticism of you?
 8 A. That's true, I didn't.
 9 Q. Do you agree with evidence we received from one, perhaps
 10 two firefighters, that in the end they just turned their
 11 backs on you?
 12 A. That's true. I think there's a context to that also.
 13 Having an, I'll describe it as a discussion, it was
 14 definitely heated around these issues, and firefighters
 15 understandably, because they weren't getting responses
 16 to their -- the answers to their questions, were asking
 17 the same questions over. So at some point I said,
 18 "We're going round and round in circles and I'm not
 19 going to be able to give you the answers that you're
 20 actually asking for", and drew it to a conclusion by
 21 actually asking about their welfare, reminding them of
 22 the services that were actually available to them. And
 23 at that point, a number of them laughed and they did
 24 turn their backs and walk away.
 25 Q. Would it be fair to suggest that that is a poor

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1 reflection on the senior management of GMFRS, that
 2 that's how those on the ground felt?
 3 A. Absolutely. We should have been able to — frankly, the
 4 only thing that would understandably have satisfied
 5 firefighters on that night would have been to have been
 6 able to turn back time and for them to respond. In that
 7 regard, not only did we let down the people of
 8 Greater Manchester, we let those firefighters down.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you have the necessary information
 10 in your possession at the time to explain what had gone
 11 wrong?
 12 A. No. Sorry, sir, I don't think anybody did at that
 13 point.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, okay.
 15 MR GREANEY: Sir, those are all of my questions at this
 16 stage. I think we've probably been going for more than
 17 an hour and a quarter, but I'm going to see who actually
 18 does have questions. Can I ask Ms Gilmour, who
 19 represents North West Fire Control, whether she has any
 20 questions.
 21 MS GILMOUR: No. Mr Greaney has all of our issues pegged.
 22 MR GREANEY: Mr Horwell has been in touch with me to say he
 23 does not have any questions on behalf of Greater
 24 Manchester Police.
 25 Can I ask Ms Roberts on behalf of North West

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1 Ambulance Service whether she has any questions. She's
 2 usually in touch by emails but I don't have access to my
 3 emails at the moment.
 4 (Pause)
 5 I'm going to presume not in the circumstances.
 6 Ms Roberts can be assured that I know, sir, you won't
 7 regard it as discourteous that she hasn't appeared.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And if she does want to ask questions,
 9 obviously we will allow her to do so later.
 10 MR GREANEY: That simply leaves on behalf of the bereaved
 11 families, Mr Cooper, who I'm quite certain will have
 12 questions, and finally the Fire and Rescue Service.
 13 It's probably better, Mr Cooper, that we have your
 14 questions after a break.
 15 I wonder whether a sensible course is to take an
 16 early lunch and resume at 1.25? I'm entirely in your
 17 hands.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Certainly.
 19 Is an hour all right for you?
 20 A. Yes, fine, sir.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you very much.
 22 (12.28 pm)
 23 (The lunch adjournment)
 24 (1.30 pm)
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, thank you.

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1 Questions from MR COOPER
 2 MR COOPER: As you know, I ask questions on behalf of the
 3 families on this issue.
 4 You indicated to the chair that you were and remain
 5 a good friend of Mr O'Reilly.
 6 A. That's true, sir.
 7 Q. And indeed a good friend of Mr Keelan as well?
 8 A. I haven't spoken to or seen Mr Keelan since
 9 Christmas 2019.
 10 Q. I see. So far as Mr O'Reilly is concerned, is he
 11 retired?
 12 A. Yes. That's my understanding.
 13 Q. You know him well, don't you?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. And in fact you only spoke with him last night.
 16 A. We exchanged texts.
 17 Q. And given that you know him well, your evidence is that
 18 he's retired?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. And he'd tell you if he was making any job applications,
 21 wouldn't he?
 22 A. I know he's applied for a job.
 23 Q. He's applying to be chief of the Northern Ireland Fire
 24 and Rescue Service, isn't he?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. And I think he's one of a shortlist of a handful of
 2 candidates?
 3 A. I have no idea.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You'll have to tell me the relevance of
 5 this. Do it in the questions.
 6 MR COOPER: I'm going to ask you some questions about your
 7 conversation with Mr O'Reilly. Are you being full and
 8 frank about your conversations with Mr O'Reilly?
 9 A. Yes, sir.
 10 Q. Did you speak with him last night?
 11 A. No.
 12 Q. So far as the text messaging is concerned, it was simply
 13 text messaging, was it?
 14 A. Text or WhatsApp, I can't recall.
 15 Q. I was about to ask you about WhatsApp because you're on
 16 a closed WhatsApp group as well, aren't you?
 17 A. I don't understand what you mean.
 18 Q. It's your paragraph 49, a WhatsApp group consisting of
 19 four people: Mr O'Reilly, Mr Keelan, Mr Argyle and you.
 20 Your paragraph 49. I'll give you the reference.
 21 {INQ026693/12}. A WhatsApp group with members of
 22 Mr O'Reilly, Mr Keelan and Mr Argyle and you; is that
 23 right?
 24 A. No, that was a WhatsApp group for principal officers
 25 when I was employed by Greater Manchester Fire and

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1 Rescue Service.
 2 Q. When you were employed by them. Keep that on the screen
 3 nonetheless, please, Mr Lopez, because I want to ask
 4 about that in a moment. Are you on any other WhatsApp
 5 group which is closed between you and Mr O'Reilly for
 6 instance?
 7 A. No.
 8 MR WARNOCK: I am sorry, but what's the relevance of this?
 9 I have not risen at all before, but this is people's
 10 private personal information.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's stop for a moment. You are
 12 perfectly entitled to see any WhatsApps about this case.
 13 I'm not sure you have a closed one between two people,
 14 but perhaps you do --
 15 MR COOPER: Perhaps I'm wrong (overspeaking) --
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: (overspeaking) -- and that's closed.
 17 You are perfectly entitled to ask him whether he had
 18 been communicating about the inquiry matters at all.
 19 MR COOPER: That's all I'm really asking about. Let me get
 20 straight to the point.
 21 Have you been discussing in any way evidence that
 22 you intend to give or indeed that any of Mr O'Reilly or
 23 Mr Keelan intend to give in this inquiry?
 24 A. No, sir.
 25 Q. The communication that you had yesterday was a text

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1 message. Have you disclosed that to the inquiry?
 2 A. I see no reason why not, sir.
 3 Q. I'll move on then.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I make it clear? As I understand
 5 it, just so people don't think that if they say they
 6 have communicated they're in some way doing something
 7 completely heinous that they're not allowed to do.
 8 There's nothing to stop witnesses talking to each other
 9 if they are seeking information about things, but it's
 10 clearly a matter which we may need to know to find out
 11 whether they have got information from each other.
 12 You say you haven't been WhatsApping about --
 13 A. He knew I was appearing here and there was --
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did he know that because you told him or
 15 he knew already?
 16 A. I think he texted me saying "good luck", so I assumed
 17 that he knew already.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right, thank you.
 19 MR COOPER: I'll move on.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I hope luck doesn't come into it!
 21 MR COOPER: Absolutely.
 22 Mr Mottram, one of the previous witnesses we've
 23 heard from, and I want to ask whether you agree with
 24 this, said that:
 25 "On the night there was a clear lack of leadership

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1 when it was needed for the biggest terror attack that
 2 Manchester has ever had."
 3 "A clear lack of leadership when it was needed for
 4 the biggest terror attack that Manchester has ever had."
 5 Do you agree with Mr Mottram?
 6 A. I agree in the context that the Fire and Rescue Service
 7 failed to respond, so that clearly fell to leadership
 8 issues.
 9 Q. Within that, the Fire and Rescue Service failed to
 10 respond, that was as a result of a clear lack of
 11 leadership, wasn't it?
 12 A. The lack of leadership -- I'm not clear what you mean.
 13 In which particular context?
 14 Q. Well, Mr Greaney's taken you through a myriad of points
 15 concerning the potential failure of leadership: making
 16 errors, for instance, and making decisional errors.
 17 A. A failure of leadership within the organisation, yes.
 18 Q. So you agree?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. That a clear lack of leadership, brackets, as you say,
 21 within the organisation, when it was needed for the
 22 biggest terror attack that Manchester ever had? All
 23 right.
 24 I showed you a moment ago the paragraph 49 about the
 25 WhatsApp group that existed at the time between

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1 paragraph 49 again between Mr O'Reilly, Mr Keelan,
 2 Mr Argyle and you. Perhaps we could put that up again,
 3 Mr Lopez. Thank you:
 4 "As a principal officer I was a member of the GMFRS
 5 principal officers' WhatsApp group. The group at the
 6 time comprised of [what I have just read]... The first
 7 I knew of any incident at the arena was when I received
 8 a message through the group from Dave Keelan at 23.11."
 9 Then you go on to describe:
 10 "Due the way that WhatsApp functions, I can no
 11 longer access this message with the passage of time."
 12 Were there other communications between the four of
 13 you, and I'm not suggesting this was wrong, quite the
 14 contrary, were there any other communications between
 15 the four of you on the night of 22 May?
 16 A. The communications that I was shown as part of the
 17 evidence proposal, they are the only communications that
 18 I can recall.
 19 Q. So are you -- when there was a lack of information --
 20 and I'm not suggesting that either Mr O'Reilly,
 21 Mr Keelan, you or Mr Argyle were on the scene, of course
 22 we know that. But in terms of the four of you most
 23 communicating as principal officers on the most
 24 catastrophic night in Manchester's history, one might
 25 think, was the WhatsApp group used to liaise,

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1 communicate, share information, pool information?
 2 A. I was shown a message earlier on today which was from
 3 Mr O'Reilly to me, I don't know if it was WhatsApp or
 4 a text message, relating to some information that had
 5 been provided by GMP Silver. Other than that message
 6 and the other messages that were part of the evidence
 7 proposal, I'm not aware of any other communication via
 8 WhatsApp.
 9 Q. Would you accept that that's rather surprising given
 10 that you are principal officers at the most catastrophic
 11 night in Manchester's history, one might conclude, and
 12 the WhatsApp group for principal officers is not
 13 deployed to share and pool information?
 14 A. No, because myself and Mr O'Reilly were both in the
 15 command support room, so we were able to share
 16 information directly face to face if that was necessary.
 17 Mr Keelan was at home and Mr Argyle was out of the
 18 country.
 19 Q. We know Mr Argyle is out of the country. Mr Keelan,
 20 when he got out of bed, was at home. Did you try to
 21 contact him?
 22 A. No, sir.
 23 Q. Well, was there any reason for that?
 24 A. I wouldn't ordinarily contact (overspeaking).
 25 Q. I'm sure you wouldn't ordinarily have done anything on

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1 that night, but this is not an ordinary night.
 2 A. I'm in a command support room with a chief officer, an
 3 assistant principal officer, and two group managers.
 4 I think there's sufficient people in that room to deal
 5 with that incident at that time without the need to
 6 involve Mr Keelan further.
 7 Q. Let's look at one image, please, just simply so we can
 8 have in mind the structure of command here.
 9 {INQ026700/1}.
 10 MR GREANEY: The witness has referred to being shown an
 11 image of the WhatsApp messages. He wasn't in fact shown
 12 all of the messages that the inquiry and core
 13 participants are in possession of. I'll just give the
 14 references — I hope Mr Cooper won't think I'm
 15 interrupting.
 16 MR COOPER: Of course not.
 17 MR GREANEY: {INQ040019/1} and also {INQ040020/1}. In
 18 essence, they show some communication before midnight
 19 and then none until a little bit later.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 21 MR COOPER: Thank you. Obviously I'm on my feet. If
 22 there's anything in there that should be brought to my
 23 attention, I have a very able junior. He looks over his
 24 shoulder, but I mean him.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Very modest of him!

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1 MR COOPER: This is a structure, just so we can get you all
 2 into perspective here, that existed at the time of the
 3 atrocity. So there we have Mr O'Reilly at the top of
 4 the tree, if one might put it that way, and then
 5 Mr Argyle, who you say was out of the country at the
 6 time, and then you.
 7 A. Yes, sir.
 8 Q. So effectively, would it be too simplistic to say you
 9 were effectively second-in-command on the night?
 10 A. Of the organisation, yes.
 11 Q. Yes, of the organisation.
 12 A. With the exception that, as I explained earlier,
 13 I wasn't actually on the principal officer rota. So I'd
 14 say, slightly correcting what I have just said, is in
 15 theory Peter O'Reilly is in charge and Dave Keelan is
 16 second-in-command.
 17 Q. Right. I understand that. I'm just looking at the
 18 corporate structure, for want of a better expression.
 19 Generally, you were — again it may be crass to express
 20 it this way, but second-in-command?
 21 A. Of the organisation? I'd say that myself and Dave
 22 Keelan were jointly second-in-command.
 23 Q. We'll be hearing from him later. We see underneath you,
 24 the individuals or the positions, I should say, that
 25 were subservient to you. It seems to confirm what you

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1 have already told the chair, that your speciality was
 2 prevention and protection; is that right?
 3 A. In the main, yes. There were a couple of other areas
 4 that I subsequently took charge of.
 5 Q. The operational experience that you had, you referred to
 6 the prevention and protection aspect of your work as the
 7 day job. What was your operational experience?
 8 A. I think I've outlined some of that in my statement. But
 9 as I say, since — I might stand to correct myself,
 10 I think it was actually 2002, not 2001, as I said this
 11 morning — I've been on the flexible duty system, so
 12 providing response to a whole manner of incidents at
 13 every level in the organisation, from station manager,
 14 all the way up to assistant chief officer as part of
 15 responding to all manner of incidents, which range from
 16 house fires, all the way up to significant floodings,
 17 and significant incidents involving very large
 18 buildings.
 19 Q. It's just your expression: it wasn't your day job. You
 20 were doing that at the same time as performing your day
 21 job, as you put it, were you?
 22 A. Yes, anybody that's on the flexible duty system can be
 23 performing their daytime role and then, if it's needed,
 24 be mobilised to an incident from that job.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: How often would you be called out under

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1 that system?
 2 A. For me as a principal officer it's quite rare. Probably
 3 no more than three or four times a year. That said,
 4 it's also quite often that the — although I might not
 5 be responding to an incident, an assistant principal
 6 officer will contact you about other incidents that are
 7 ongoing at the time. So you may not — I may not
 8 actually attend, but have a discussion about incidents
 9 whilst I'm at home or at work.
 10 MR COOPER: So your operational experience, you'd accept,
 11 was limited?
 12 A. I disagree. It's not limited. It may not be as
 13 significant as other people in the organisation.
 14 Q. Would you agree, and I'm not necessarily speaking of you
 15 at the moment, that people who do the sort of work you
 16 do in the Fire Service should have more of an
 17 opportunity to get operational experience?
 18 A. We have certainly more recently put in place — I say
 19 "more recently", but you'll appreciate I have been
 20 retired for over 3 years. But prior to my retirement,
 21 we put in place a number of systems that actually don't
 22 rely on people having direct operational experience but
 23 put in place quite a robust assessment of people's
 24 operational competence, which has to be signed off by
 25 other officers.

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1 Q. Thank you. I want to ask you now a little about the
 2 night in question. Let me go straight to that
 3 conversation. I don't need to repeat those which
 4 Mr Greaney's dealt with which related to Mr Hynes,
 5 Steve Hynes, so you know the area of evidence that we're
 6 talking about here.
 7 If I understand your evidence correctly that you
 8 gave this morning, one of the issues that seemed to sway
 9 the chief and you as well was that Mr Hynes had got
 10 a degree of experience of knowing of the capabilities of
 11 the Fire Service, including dealing with cardiac events
 12 and that sort of thing?
 13 A. Yes, and as I said, as part of that, NWAS had come into
 14 Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and done an
 15 audit of our training.
 16 Q. That experience gained by Mr Hynes, was that on a course
 17 or an exercise or what?
 18 A. No. I'll stand corrected, but part of that experience
 19 would have been through the audit because he had to sign
 20 that off, is my understanding. Part of it was in — we
 21 had regular meetings between the Fire and Rescue Service
 22 and NWAS and discussed capabilities, and part of it —
 23 there's only Mr Hynes who could really answer whether or
 24 not part of that was through his own training.
 25 Q. So as far you know, and I am talking about as far as you

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1 know, you and the chief were comforted by Mr Hynes' view
 2 because of various conversations and discussions he'd
 3 had with the Fire Service in the past?
 4 A. And as I say, an audit of training.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can you just help me: we know about this
 6 and we have heard a lot in the past about the project
 7 in relation to cardiac arrests, so if there are no
 8 ambulances, for example, the Fire Service can go and
 9 deal with it and have the necessary skills to deal with
 10 it, at least until the ambulance can get there; is that
 11 right?
 12 A. Yes. I wouldn't want to upset colleagues in the Fire
 13 Brigades Union or elsewhere, but we were acting as an
 14 agency on behalf of NWAS but our response was always
 15 alongside NWAS; it was never us responding on our own.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. So this audit that was done, was
 17 that part — to do with the training for the cardiac
 18 arrests or was it generally your capabilities in dealing
 19 with injuries overall?
 20 A. Its principal focus was around cardiac arrests but as
 21 far as I am aware it looked at other areas as well.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm going to be very careful not to run
 23 down in any way what all firefighters — their skills at
 24 dealing injuries, but the distinction here is, isn't it,
 25 that some people have the special additional training as

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1 part of dealing with an MTFA?
 2 A. Yes, they do, sir.
 3 MR COOPER: And a point I was to develop with you, one
 4 question following on from the chair's question to you,
 5 that Mr Hynes may well have been to a degree
 6 knowledgeable about cardiac events, but what was going
 7 on at the arena was far more varied than that important
 8 issue, but far more varied than that, wasn't it?
 9 A. Yes, it was, sir. I was confident and clear that
 10 Mr Hynes had sufficient understanding beyond just the
 11 Fire and Rescue Service's ability to respond to cardiac
 12 arrests and he had sufficient understanding of what our
 13 capabilities were elsewhere.
 14 Q. And why were you of that view and why therefore, by
 15 implication, was the chief of that view?
 16 A. Certainly — I can only speak for myself, not
 17 Mr O'Reilly. I was of that view — certainly
 18 conversations that we'd had with Mr Hynes — although
 19 the primary focus of that was around the cardiac arrest
 20 response, we'd also started to explore the possibility
 21 of other avenues, being able, frankly, to assist each
 22 organisation and what was the potential around, for
 23 example — and these conversations were only in early
 24 stages — around was there a potential for firefighters
 25 to be trained sufficiently to act at some point if there

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1 were pressures, for example, on the Ambulance Service,
 2 for a firefighter at some point in the future to able to
 3 not be part of the Fire and Rescue Service this day, but
 4 to go and be not a paramedic but an ambulance
 5 technician.
 6 Q. That's all, if I may say so, very fine and laudable, but
 7 that is hardly indicative of an in-depth knowledge of
 8 MTFA, for instance, that might be required on the night
 9 (overspeaking).
 10 A. In order to even have that conversation with him, he
 11 needed to understand what our internal capabilities
 12 were.
 13 Q. Yes, but what you have at your disposal and what the
 14 chief had at his disposal at the time on the other side
 15 of the coin was Mr Levy, Mr Nankivell, who effectively
 16 developed TRU/SRT, Mr Fletcher and Mr Etches. Surely
 17 their views, with the greatest of respect to a Bronze
 18 NWAS person, their views surely were far more helpful,
 19 were they not, on what was required?
 20 A. The issue wasn't just around Mr Hynes' knowledge.
 21 Mr Hynes had, for the first time, information directly
 22 from the scene that was now available within
 23 Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.
 24 Q. Yes, but I'm just looking at what you've said. You have
 25 majored on, and that's why I'm doing the same and I took

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1 a note of it at the time, that it wasn't just Mr Hynes
 2 being Mr Hynes, it was Mr Hynes who had a knowledge
 3 which was taken into account. Can I assume from that,
 4 for instance, that had someone been saying this from
 5 NWAS who wasn't Mr Hynes, it probably would have been
 6 ignored and the views of Levy, Fletcher, Nankivell and
 7 Etches be prevailed on?
 8 A. Quite possibly, yes.
 9 Q. So what we have here, the thing that turned it from
 10 Mr Hynes, as you say quite possibly, is the fact that
 11 he'd had these various conversations and discussions and
 12 as you put it, preliminary conversations and discussions
 13 about MTFA, which trumped Levy, Fletcher, Etches and
 14 Nankivell? That's what you're saying. Do you want to
 15 think about that?
 16 A. I think, as I said this morning, that was the first time
 17 we'd got any kind of situational awareness from the
 18 scene. I think in answering questions from the chair
 19 this morning, I also accepted that we should have been
 20 sending SRT.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just wonder whether -- it's a degree
 22 of situational awareness. We have to take into account
 23 the stage which we'd got to by now, which is very late
 24 in the day.
 25 A. Yes.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And I think it's right to say, and
 2 I will no doubt be corrected if I'm wrong, what was then
 3 being required and what firefighters actually did and
 4 were very useful at is they went and got trolleys from
 5 the ambulances, they went into the casualty clearing
 6 station, and they physically moved people, got them on
 7 to the trolleys and moved them and put them in
 8 ambulances, ready to get away.
 9 A. Yes, sir.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If that's right, you may be able to
 11 understand why you don't need to have a specially
 12 trained firefighter to deal with an MTFA to deal with
 13 that.
 14 What he's not giving situational awareness about,
 15 which seems to me, as I've indicated really this
 16 morning, to be maybe critical is actually the zoning.
 17 A. Yes, sir.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Which you really -- and I just -- it
 19 seems to me that zoning is absolutely vital to know
 20 isn't it?
 21 A. It is important, yes.
 22 MR COOPER: In the absence of that important knowledge,
 23 surely a sensible approach would have been: we don't
 24 know -- yes, Mr Hynes is there, but we need to make
 25 sure, this is a catastrophe? You certainly knew that

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1 didn't you?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. It was a catastrophe that was developing. So why didn't
 4 you rely on your own people, trained people, Nankivell
 5 developed TRUs, Levy, Fletcher, Etches, err on the side,
 6 please, of caution and say, "Well, thank you, Mr Hynes,
 7 we've had discussions with you and no doubt you are an
 8 informed amateur, because we are the professionals,
 9 we are the Fire Service, and thank you, you are a
 10 professional, NWAS" -- I'm not degrading Mr Hynes --
 11 "Thank you, Mr Hynes, but you're an amateur when it
 12 comes to fire responses, I have four experts next to me,
 13 one, you didn't know it, an incident commander, telling
 14 me to the contrary". Did it not cross your mind to back
 15 your people?
 16 A. What crossed my mind was that we were dealing with
 17 a situation that involved a significant number of
 18 casualties and the expert in terms of knowledge that
 19 casualties may -- what assistance casualties may require
 20 was probably NWAS.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, I've got considerable
 22 sympathy with this view, as you'll be aware from the
 23 questions we have asked this morning, and I've got the
 24 point. I want to ask something entirely different, if
 25 you don't mind, and you can come back to that if you

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1 want to.
 2 MR COOPER: I was going to go on to the incident commander
 3 issue, but it's a separate issue.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We haven't raised this at all and in
 5 some ways it's irrelevant to some issues, but one of the
 6 problems down there was we've heard you've got
 7 19 ambulances lined up and we've got both the people who
 8 man the ambulances actually in the casualty clearing
 9 station helping, so those 19 ambulances are actually
 10 just stuck there, not able to take people to hospital,
 11 which on the face of it seems a bit odd. Has anyone
 12 thought of training and dealing with firefighters
 13 actually driving the ambulances? Maybe not being in the
 14 back helping with the casualties, but actually being in
 15 the driving seat so you could then halve the number of
 16 paramedics who are actually needed for it?
 17 A. I'm not aware of that being a thought that crossed
 18 anyone's mind.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Would it be a good idea?
 20 A. Yes, sir. We have — not in the context of 22 May, but
 21 there have been conversations separately, certainly
 22 before I retired, about firefighters being trained to
 23 drive, not so much ambulances but rapid-response
 24 vehicles, primarily because NWA rapid-response vehicles
 25 only have one person in it rather than two.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's a possible idea that I would like
 2 people to at least think about.
 3 MR COOPER: That hadn't occurred to me. It's an interesting
 4 proposition.
 5 Incident commander. You said you were not of the
 6 view, you did not know that Mr Levy was the incident
 7 commander?
 8 A. No, I'm pretty sure I didn't.
 9 Q. Should it have been your responsibility to find out who
 10 the incident commander was upon your attendance?
 11 A. Sir, to be honest, having arrived in the command support
 12 room, and knowing that we don't have anybody physically
 13 at the scene, I wouldn't expect us to have an incident
 14 commander.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That seems odd. If you go to a muster
 16 point and you're all waiting for something to do, don't
 17 you need an incident commander?
 18 A. I heard part of this in testimony either yesterday or
 19 the day before, I can't remember which. For example,
 20 if we declare any incident as a major incident, we would
 21 have mustered vehicles at one or two stations either
 22 side of that. And as part of that, we would have also
 23 mobilised an officer to each of those rendezvous points
 24 to — and it may just be language — to essentially be
 25 a marshalling officer. They wouldn't be an incident

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1 commander.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So when you're doing that, you have
 3 a major incident, you are marshalling people and nobody
 4 in charge?
 5 A. Normally, and I accept this wasn't normal, where we've
 6 declared a major incident, we've declared a major
 7 incident because we're physically at the scene with an
 8 incident commander who has declared that major incident.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It seems the whole thing, the whole
 10 systems are dealt with on the basis that someone is
 11 at the scene?
 12 A. Yes, sir.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When you don't have someone at the
 14 scene, it falls down, the system?
 15 A. It certainly fell down on the night.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Would it normally fall down?
 17 A. I think it's the first time I've ever been involved in
 18 or been made aware of an incident where we haven't had
 19 an incident commander at the scene.
 20 MR COOPER: And it so happened to be on the night of the
 21 biggest catastrophe that hit Manchester?
 22 A. Yes, sir.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think he has agreed somebody should
 24 have been at the scene —
 25 MR COOPER: All right, I'll move on.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — or at least the closest RVP. I meant
 2 you, not he. Not being rude.
 3 MR COOPER: Was Mr Levy relieved of his position?
 4 A. No, sir.
 5 Q. Was he told in any way to stand down or was there any
 6 indication given to him that he should stand down?
 7 A. No, sir, and I think in — if I recall correctly from
 8 hearing some of Mr Levy's evidence, after my phone
 9 conversation with him, he said he took that to be me
 10 standing him down. But there was never actually
 11 a conversation with him about incident command.
 12 Q. So you had no intention of him standing down?
 13 A. I didn't know he was the incident commander.
 14 Q. Oh I see, right.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: As I recall it, because Andy Berry was
 16 told to take people in to the arena and lead the — he
 17 took that as being relieved of the incident command, as
 18 I understand it.
 19 A. My understanding from when Mr Levy gave evidence, and
 20 I may be recollecting it wrong, is that he took from my
 21 phone conversation with him that I was standing him
 22 down, but —
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Because you were telling (overspeaking)
 24 Andy Berry should —
 25 A. No, my conversation with him did not include any aspect

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1 around an incident commander.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right, okay. Sorry, that's my faulty
 3 recollection and we'll check what the evidence was.
 4 MR GREANEY: My recollection is that Mr Levy recalls
 5 a telephone conversation with Mr Harris in which he was
 6 told basically, "Thank you for your opinions, but keep
 7 out of it".
 8 MR COOPER: Did you say that?
 9 A. No, not at all. He may have taken it as being words to
 10 that effect but that wasn't the conversation I had with
 11 him.
 12 Q. I want to ask you just a little about your role actually
 13 in the control room. I want to take you to Mr Levy's
 14 statement, please, and ask you to comment on what he
 15 says about you. {INQ026737/21}, paragraphs 99 and 100,
 16 please. Second line:
 17 "I was not aware that ACFO Harris was in the CSR
 18 until this point. I was surprised to hear from him and
 19 I was not aware of his involvement in the incident or
 20 his presence. I was unclear as to his role.
 21 ACFO Harris told me that he appreciated I was trying to
 22 be helpful but that they didn't need anything else from
 23 me. ACFO Harris confirmed that the SRT was not
 24 required. I considered the call to indicate that
 25 command decisions were being made from the CSR and that

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1 I had no further command responsibility in this
 2 incident, nor was my input welcome given the tone of the
 3 comment to me. I was surprised given my experience of
 4 MTFA, my situational awareness at the scene, and assumed
 5 that there must be some information that was being kept
 6 from me. At no point was I formally relieved of my role
 7 as incident commander."
 8 Putting together all that we've asked of you just
 9 over the last 5 minutes or so, does paragraph 100
 10 accurately sum up then the position?
 11 A. I don't think so, sir.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Stop for a minute. Does it
 13 accurately sum up what you said to him, ie "I appreciate
 14 you're trying to be helpful but we don't need anything
 15 else from you", which is his presumably advice he is
 16 giving?
 17 A. I can't recollect the entirety of the conversation.
 18 I may well have ended that sentence with, "We don't need
 19 anything else from you, Ben". The intention was
 20 certainly, "We don't need anything else from you at this
 21 time", not, "We don't need anything else".
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So that may accurately reflect --
 23 A. It might do.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But what you're saying is he's
 25 misinterpreted it?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 MR COOPER: One of the criticisms you make of the control
 3 room -- I can take you to it if needs be but you may
 4 recognise it -- you say that in your view there were too
 5 many cooks.
 6 A. Yes, I recall saying that in my statement.
 7 Q. What did you mean by there being too many cooks in the
 8 room?
 9 A. I appreciate this could be equally turned the other way.
 10 There was a conversation, there was a relaying of
 11 a conversation between the chief officer and
 12 Steve Hynes. There was then -- forgive me, these
 13 conversations were all actually very, very brief.
 14 I know they can give the suggestion (inaudible:
 15 distorted) lengthy and they're not.
 16 There was then a conversation in the command support
 17 room around whether or not that should be standard
 18 firefighters or fire appliances or it would at least
 19 include SRT. There was a decision taken that it's
 20 standard firefighters, standard fire appliances, but
 21 there's then an ongoing conversation around SRT. And
 22 from my perspective, that decision's been made and we're
 23 looking then to mobilise that resource. That was the
 24 end of that conversation.
 25 Q. Were these cooks Nankivell, Levy, Fletcher or Etches in

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1 your view?
 2 A. They were the people in the room, so yes.
 3 Q. When you say "too many cooks", I just want to see what
 4 sort of cooks you're dismissing and their experience.
 5 Were you referring as part of the too many cooks
 6 Nankivell, Levy, Fletcher and Etches?
 7 A. Yes, sir, I think I've just said that.
 8 Q. Well, these are experienced people. I have outlined it
 9 before, I'm not going to repeat myself, is it not rather
 10 dismissive to refer to these experienced colleagues as
 11 being too many cooks?
 12 A. When giving my statement, that's probably inappropriate
 13 language, yes.
 14 Q. Can I suggest to you it is inappropriate language but it
 15 actually reflects what your mindset was? You may want
 16 to mellow it down now, Mr Harris, but I'm going to
 17 suggest to you that that's exactly how you were thinking
 18 on the night, wasn't it: too many cooks, too many people
 19 interfering?
 20 A. No, I don't think so, sir. There were sufficient people
 21 in the room to actually be dealing with the amount of
 22 work that was going on.
 23 Q. Mm.
 24 A. The comment around too many cooks was solely in relation
 25 to mobilising SRT.

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1 Q. Because you're aware, aren't you, we've heard
2 Mr Nankivell's evidence that he thought you got in the
3 way.
4 A. I have heard that.
5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's a different use of too many
6 cooks, which is certainly the way I would understand the
7 expression normally, too many people in the room for
8 doing the jobs which are available, and it may be that
9 you were the cook too many as it happens.
10 A. Certainly that was Mr Nankivell's opinion.
11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You said you didn't have much to do in
12 fact, did you?
13 A. No.
14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you didn't make a significant
15 contribution?
16 A. As I said this morning, I was expecting to turn up to
17 a command support room where we had already mobilise
18 significant resources.
19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.
20 MR COOPER: Let's have a look at paragraph 72 of your
21 statement, please, {INQ26693/17}:
22 "Nankivell, Levy, Fletcher continued to discuss the
23 potential to mobilise an MTFA capability. I felt that
24 this discussion continued regardless of the information
25 received from NWAS..."

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1 And I've asked you about that:
2 "... as to what resources were required. It seemed
3 to me that there was a desire to use specific types of
4 GMFRS resources because they were available rather than
5 because of information suggesting that they were needed.
6 Given the discussions between the various NILOs, both
7 in the CSR and at Manchester Central Fire Station, it
8 also felt as though there were too many cooks involved
9 in the decision-making process."
10 So who were the cooks involved specifically in the
11 decision-making process that you felt were superfluous?
12 A. That's probably clumsy use of language. As I've just
13 said to you a few minutes earlier, the cooks I was
14 referring to would have certainly been Mr Etches,
15 Mr Fletcher and Mr Nankivell.
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So at some stage, I'll have to make some
17 sort of decision about whether Mr O'Reilly made the
18 right decision or the wrong decision. But is what
19 you're saying there is simply: the decision's been made,
20 that's done for, stop arguing about it?
21 A. Yes, sir, essentially, yes.
22 MR COOPER: Can I take you to {INQ019412/4}, please. Let's
23 go to the top to identify this, {INQ019412/1}, so we can
24 see the document. This is a self-administered interview
25 by you.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I haven't come across one of those
2 before, interviewing yourself.
3 MR COOPER: {INQ019412/4}. I think I've asked you enough
4 questions. This doesn't take it any further. Let me
5 just double-check.
6 (Pause)
7 No, it doesn't take it any further, thank you,
8 Mr Lopez. It's only going to be a repetition of what
9 I've already asked you.
10 There was a suggestion made that you were listening
11 to what was being said and simply repeating what was
12 being said without really having your own individual
13 input on the night. Would you --
14 A. I've heard that, sir.
15 Q. Would you agree with that?
16 A. No, I wouldn't, sir.
17 Q. Anyway, without going into every single aspect of it,
18 you were described as an unneeded cog and the general
19 view or the view of a number of people, experienced
20 people, was that you got in the way. You say you
21 didn't?
22 A. No, I don't believe I did, sir.
23 Q. All right. But you accept, and I think you accepted
24 this morning, that you made really no contribution to
25 what was going on in the room on the night?

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1 A. My contribution was very minor.
2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No significant contribution.
3 MR COOPER: I want to ask you, please, to look at
4 paragraph 85 of your statement. This is the incident
5 that you have spoken of later on:
6 "The firefighters were seething and needed to let
7 off steam. I took the view that it was better to let
8 them vent at me than to allow them to tear strips off
9 the NILOs who had been involved in some of the
10 decision-making that they were annoyed about. Where
11 I could, I tried to explain about the NWAS request for
12 firefighters rather than MTFA and that it was prudent to
13 withhold MTFA due to the potential to need them
14 elsewhere if the incident developed further."
15 We've heard this before, there are about three
16 reasons given for the decision being made going back to
17 Mr Hynes, but your evidence so far has been it was
18 purely based upon what Mr Hynes was saying to
19 Mr O'Reilly and relying on Mr Hynes' knowledge,
20 effectively.
21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Again, just to clarify the issue, my
22 impression of the firefighters' evidence was they were
23 annoyed not just at the last thing that happened but
24 actually going right back to the start as to why they
25 hadn't gone in and that is what they were complaining

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1 about.
 2 MR COOPER: Absolutely, sir.
 3 Indeed, this is only -- let me deal with that now.
 4 This is -- what you say in paragraph 85 is just the tip
 5 of the iceberg, isn't it? They were complaining about
 6 effectively not going in and not going in quicker and
 7 hard enough?
 8 A. They were understandably complaining about the entire
 9 evening.
 10 Q. But is the reason, and can the chair focus on the reason
 11 for the Hynes decision, that the reason for that
 12 decision was relying upon Mr Hynes and trusting his
 13 experience? It was nothing to do with holding resources
 14 back?
 15 A. No, sorry, there was also a conversation, albeit very
 16 brief, in the CSR about the potential for MTFA to be
 17 needed later on.
 18 Q. When you say a brief conversation, can we at least go
 19 away with the settled position that the primary reason
 20 for sending in a crew that was capable of dealing with
 21 a domestic fire, the primary reason for doing that was
 22 what Mr Hynes was saying and relying on his knowledge?
 23 A. That's what I'm saying, yes.
 24 Q. That's the primary reason for that decision, thank you.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I just ask about this meeting. Were

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1 you aware before you went it was going to be a pretty
 2 fiery meeting?
 3 A. I had a reasonable idea it would be.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You knew they were very angry before you
 5 went?
 6 A. Yes.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Who asked you to go and deal with this?
 8 A. Nobody. I had a conversation with the chief fire
 9 officer. He had already gone to GMP force headquarters
 10 to attend the SCG when that happened. As part of that
 11 conversation with him, I told him -- relayed the
 12 information that we'd got from Carlos Meakin, and told
 13 him that I intended to go.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So it was your decision to go to see if
 15 you could give some sort of explanation which would at
 16 least satisfy people to some extent?
 17 A. Yes, sir.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But it didn't actually work?
 19 A. No, and in reality, I don't think it ever was going to
 20 work.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Perhaps made it worse? It is not your
 22 fault that it made it worse.
 23 A. I still take the view that ... it didn't achieve
 24 anything.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's something you should have done?

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1 A. If I hadn't done it, not only would they have not had
 2 any answers, which they still didn't have, but they
 3 would have been even more critical of leadership and
 4 management for not going to have a conversation with
 5 them.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 7 MR COOPER: Let's be clear about the atmosphere of this
 8 debrief and I'm going to read back to you the evidence
 9 of Mr Topping and ask you whether you agree. Let's be
 10 clear about the enormity of feeling at that debrief.
 11 Mr Topping said:
 12 "I have never seen firefighters crying at a debrief.
 13 Firefighters and officers felt such shame. I felt
 14 ashamed to be a firefighter and I felt we had let the
 15 people of Greater Manchester down."
 16 That was the feeling, wasn't it, at this debrief?
 17 A. It was, although I have to say the kind of configuration
 18 of this was also almost me in the centre and a ring of
 19 firefighters around me. I can't exactly recall, it
 20 could have been two, three, four firefighters deep.
 21 I didn't witness anybody actually crying, but that
 22 doesn't mean to say that nobody was.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. We've seen a number of
 24 firefighters, as you'll be aware, coming forward, still
 25 deeply upset --

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1 A. Yes.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- at what happened, as no doubt you've
 3 expressed that you are too. It's not just limited to
 4 firefighters, it's senior officers who have expressed it
 5 as well.
 6 MR COOPER: Let me try and deal with the next section of my
 7 questions succinctly. Chief O'Reilly's leadership
 8 approach was intimidating, wasn't it?
 9 A. I think I said this morning I can understand why some
 10 people would feel that it was intimidating. I didn't
 11 feel it was intimidating.
 12 Q. And could people, as you've conceded, feel, you didn't,
 13 that it was intimidating, could people have legitimately
 14 felt in dealing with him they were being bullied?
 15 A. No, sir, not at all.
 16 Q. Well, why do you say that? Because you've accepted that
 17 they might legitimately feel intimidated by his
 18 approach, whatever he intended or otherwise and that's
 19 a matter we'll speak to him about so far as it's
 20 relevant.
 21 But you've accepted that they might find his
 22 approach to them intimidating. That is an easy step to
 23 finding it bullying as well, isn't it?
 24 A. I disagree. Not necessarily, no. One does not
 25 necessarily lead to the other.

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1 Q. You're a good friend of Mr O'Reilly, aren't you?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. And I'm sure you'd want to speak up for him?
 4 A. I'm here to tell the truth.
 5 Q. Well, you can help us. It could be, couldn't it, that
 6 those that might have found him intimidating could also
 7 have found him bullying?
 8 A. I'm not aware of Mr O'Reilly bullying anybody.
 9 Q. You've heard the words used to describe him and I'm not
 10 going to labour the point, but you have heard the views
 11 used to describe him. As well as intimidating we've had
 12 not approachable, oppressive. We've even had, although
 13 retracted, bombastic. These are words being used by
 14 different people about him. Would you agree that he
 15 could come over that way to certain people?
 16 A. I honestly couldn't speak on behalf of those other
 17 people. My experience of him — for example,
 18 in relation to being open, he was the most open chief
 19 that I'd ever worked for and that probably numbers seven
 20 or eight different chiefs over that 35 years. I'm not
 21 aware of people directly saying to me that they were
 22 intimidated by him or bullied by him.
 23 Q. It may well be such is the nature sometimes of that
 24 behaviour that people wouldn't have come to you because
 25 they knew you were his friend, didn't they, so let's not

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1 use you as a yardstick. It was clear to people serving
 2 at the time that you were his friend?
 3 A. At the same time, sir, it was through feedback from
 4 other people within the organisation that I then gave
 5 Mr O'Reilly feedback about how, for example, he delivers
 6 his proposals and how they then — some people then feel
 7 that they aren't able to respond. So that was by people
 8 coming to me. I'm not going to suggest for one minute
 9 that anybody or everybody would come to me because
 10 of course they wouldn't.
 11 Q. You've left now the Fire Service, haven't you?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. So you probably don't know what the new regime is like
 14 and how it may have changed and how people may or may
 15 not be happier?
 16 A. I have no idea, sir.
 17 Q. I'll deal with this briefly but it's a matter we've
 18 asked other witnesses of, if only to flag the paragraphs
 19 to the chair on North West Fire Control and your
 20 observations there. Paragraphs 96, 97, 98 and 99,
 21 please, of your statement, just to flag them and your
 22 observations on North West Fire Control.
 23 {INQ026693/22}:
 24 "I do think that we should have explored other
 25 avenues to seek more information from the police rather

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1 than relying on communications with the force duty
 2 officer. That includes better use of NWFC as an avenue
 3 for communication, or even a GMFRS officer travelling to
 4 the arena to make direct contact with other agencies.
 5 It was fortuitous that our relationship with NWSA senior
 6 officers enabled us to make the breakthrough to change
 7 our position and to improve our situational awareness."
 8 Mr Lopez, back to the start of 96, please. So:
 9 "We should have explored other avenues to seek more
 10 information from the police."
 11 We've dealt in some depth in this inquiry with what
 12 other avenues should have been sought. My simple
 13 question to you is: you're all experienced men and
 14 women; did it not occur to you to do that on the night?
 15 A. The answer to that is no, we didn't do it.
 16 Q. There's you, of your own admission, contributing very
 17 little to the night. Could you not have sat down with
 18 yourself and thought, "Hey, what about seeking other
 19 methods of getting information?" You're hardly
 20 inundated with what you were doing. Others have given
 21 evidence that they were and one could perhaps sympathise
 22 with them. But you weren't, you weren't inundated with
 23 work on the night, were you?
 24 A. No, I wasn't.
 25 Q. You've not got that excuse. What's your excuse for not

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1 thinking of something which seems to be pretty common
 2 sense and straightforward?
 3 A. The only thing to say in relation to that is, as I've
 4 explained earlier, I entered the command support room,
 5 started to get a briefing from Dean Nankivell and
 6 John Fletcher, and it was part way through that
 7 briefing, certainly before it concluded —
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you know about the difficulty in
 9 getting hold of the FDO?
 10 A. Not at that point, no, sir.
 11 MR COOPER: Paragraph 88 then on a matter the chair just
 12 raised. Paragraph 88 on the FDO — sorry, paragraph 91.
 13 Sorry, Mr Lopez, paragraph 91:
 14 "I have had the opportunity to consider the calls
 15 made by SM Berry. Although the call from Fletcher
 16 happened before I arrived... it did not form part of the
 17 brief that I received upon my arrival... possibly
 18 because O'Reilly came back into the room with
 19 an important update mid—brief."
 20 92:
 21 "It is now apparent to me that we had direct contact
 22 with the force duty officer on two occasions, albeit the
 23 first call was 1 hour 20 minutes into the incident.
 24 Both calls were an opportunity for GMFRS to seek further
 25 information about the incident and neither seized upon

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1 that opportunity. However, there was further
 2 information sought and provided regarding a forward
 3 command post. SM Berry specifically sought that
 4 information, he repeated his request, and when the
 5 information was ultimately provided, he did not act upon
 6 it."

7 So certainly then, and we're talking at around about
 8 23.50 or just after midnight, are we, did it not occur
 9 to you then at least to think: what other sources of
 10 information can we get?

11 A. At 23.50 I wasn't in the command support room --
 12 Q. I'm just using that as starting point, paragraph 91, to
 13 try and work out at what time paragraph 92
 14 (overspeaking) --

15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's all understand where we are. This
 16 is you looking back on the incident and using your
 17 experience to say what went wrong?

18 A. And I think to be clear, I only became aware of the
 19 phone conversations between -- and I appreciate they
 20 weren't necessarily directly with the force duty
 21 officer -- conversations that Andy Berry and
 22 John Fletcher had when I was told about them by our
 23 legal team, which was some time last year.

24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, I must say I'm a bit confused by
 25 the last couple of lines of 92:

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1 "There was a forward command post provided."
 2 MR GREANEY: Sir, this is the conversation, I'll get the
 3 time in a moment, when Mr Berry speaks to Mr Myerscough
 4 and he is insistent on an FCP being provided. He says,
 5 essentially: we're not going anywhere until we get one.

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Before that, the penultimate sentence
 7 says:
 8 "However, there was further information sought and
 9 provided regarding a forward command post."
 10 I can't recollect the information being provided
 11 about a forward command post.

12 MR GREANEY: It wasn't.

13 A. I seem to recall -- was it Boddington's car park being
 14 mentioned as a forward command post at some point?

15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It certainly was but I can't remember
 16 who it was provided to. We'll just check that up. It's
 17 indicative of the fact that this is information you're
 18 being given afterwards and being asked to comment on
 19 things that went wrong so far as the Fire Service is
 20 concerned.

21 MR GREANEY: Boddington's was mentioned in the call.

22 MR COOPER: Let's go back to paragraph 97 and 98, please.
 23 98:
 24 "I would have expected NWFC, once in receipt of the
 25 information that there had been an explosion, to have

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1 initiated the requirements set out on the explosion
 2 action card."

3 We've dealt with that and you deal with the action
 4 cards there. It's paragraph 100 I want to lead us
 5 into --

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm really sorry, I keep interrupting
 7 and I do apologise. In paragraph 97 that you were
 8 referring to, second line:
 9 "NWFC did not relay all of the information they had
 10 gathered from GMP. In particular, that GMP were
 11 proceeding to the RVP at the cathedral car park, as was
 12 NWAS."
 13 They did say that's the RVP.

14 A. They nominated it as the RVP.

15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you'd expect Mr Berry to have
 16 assumed that everybody else was going there, wouldn't
 17 you?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It just seems a bit of an unfair
 20 criticism of NWFC.

21 A. It probably is unfair, sir.

22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.

23 MR GREANEY: I've found that call. I do hope I am not
 24 interrupting Mr Cooper --

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, we'll let you have a clean

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1 run at it any minute now.

2 MR COOPER: Not at all, sir.

3 MR GREANEY: It's the call by Mr Berry to Mr Myerscough at
 4 23.50 and it's at pages 62 and 63 and 64 of the schedule
 5 we've all been looking at. Mr Berry is insistent upon
 6 an FCP and you'll remember there was some confusion in
 7 Mr Myerscough's mind about what that actually meant.

8 He said that he had spoken with the inspector, who
 9 had said, if you go to the old Boddington's car park
 10 near the arena, and then it was overtaken by events
 11 because he discovered the Ambulance Service were at
 12 Thompson Street.

13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. I'd forgotten that was the
 14 position. Right, I'll not interrupt for the next --

15 MR COOPER: I'll take it if you interrupt it means I've
 16 found something that interests you. I take it as
 17 a positive.

18 (Pause)

19 MR COOPER: Paragraph 100. Just to top and tail the issues
 20 relating to NWFC. We've heard it from a number of
 21 people and here is you saying it again:
 22 "I think that NWFC being remote from GMFRS was
 23 a factor in how the GMFRS incident response unfolded.
 24 Our only interaction ..."
 25 And this is an important paragraph I want to deal

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1 with because here you are as a witness saying that that
 2 remoteness was a factor in how the incident response
 3 unfolded:
 4 " ... with GWFC (sic) is by radio or telephone.
 5 In the past when we have had an in-house control room it
 6 was easier to share information quickly and precisely.
 7 Clearly there was information beings received by NWFC
 8 which needed to be shared swiftly. Decisions were also
 9 taken around mobilisation which would have benefited
 10 from face-to-face discussion. Therefore the challenge
 11 with an unplanned event like the arena is the lack of
 12 immediate presence of a GMFRS officer within NWFC."
 13 This is a matter we've explored with a number of
 14 witnesses and you say it clearly there. But I want to
 15 go back to your opening sentence:
 16 "I think that NWFC being remote from GMFRS was
 17 a factor in how the GMFRS incident response unfolded."
 18 Do you want to elaborate on that over and above what
 19 you say in your paragraph?
 20 A. Yes. I think what I'm trying to do there is give an
 21 example of where, when we had our own control room,
 22 situated at our headquarters, the control room was
 23 actually in what is now the ER hub, which is a room
 24 right next door to the command support room.
 25 For example, during the Manchester and Salford

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1 riots, we were actually in what is now the command
 2 support room getting information from colleagues in GMP
 3 about where certain rioting was taking place, where it
 4 was unsafe to mobilise to. We were able, physically
 5 able, to gather that information within that room, walk
 6 directly out into the control room and sit down next to
 7 a control operator with a list of incidents and say,
 8 "You can mobilise to that one, you shouldn't go to that,
 9 you need to go to an RVP for that one".
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I say, I well understand that. It's
 11 a possible recommendation to think of actually having
 12 someone in there and we'll need to consider that.
 13 Actually with this incident, so you think being
 14 remote was a factor in how the GMFRS incident response
 15 unfolded. This incident. How do you think it affected
 16 this incident?
 17 A. Maybe remoteness is the wrong issue. It's not having an
 18 officer in there who can actually assist North West Fire
 19 Control with their decision-making and interpretation of
 20 information that's coming in.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So rather than ringing the NILO, they
 22 would have been able to go to someone in the room for
 23 advice?
 24 A. Yes, and where, as I say in my statement, this is an
 25 unplanned event, for example Bonfire Night, we will put

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1 an officer (overspeaking) --
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We have heard about this because you are
 3 planning something. But having someone there for
 4 unplanned means there has to be someone there all the
 5 time?
 6 A. Yes.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you think that's a good idea?
 8 A. It would help with an incident like this in the future.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So they were able to ring the NILO and
 10 they did speak to the NILO immediately; what's the
 11 difference?
 12 A. Because there was information, from my understanding,
 13 that north West Fire Control actually received that
 14 wasn't subsequently passed to the NILO and to have
 15 somebody in North West (overspeaking) --
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: They'd be sitting looking at the log,
 17 following everything as it comes in? All right,
 18 I understand that. Thank you.
 19 MR COOPER: Paragraph 101. It's my fault, I should have
 20 asked you about this in relation to the incident command
 21 issues. Can we just look at paragraph 101:
 22 "Plainly there were also issues around incident
 23 command. As SM Berry was the duty NILO and was making
 24 decisions regarding the location of GMFRS resources, he
 25 would have been considered by many to be the incident

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1 commander. This would have been contrary to GMFRS
 2 policy as the service only has incident commanders on
 3 scene at incidents, not remote from them."
 4 So if we take that as read, there's nothing you need
 5 to add to that, you say that would have been contrary
 6 for Berry to have been incident commander?
 7 A. Yes, sir. As I think I've explained, we only have
 8 incident commanders who are at the scene.
 9 Q. All right.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, on that paragraph, you say right
 11 at the end, five or six lines down:
 12 "Again, this was contrary to service policy. It
 13 also struck me as odd..."
 14 A. Yes, sir.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Five lines down, I can't count:
 16 "It also struck me as odd when we eventually
 17 deployed three fire appliances to Victoria Station with
 18 SM Berry as the incident commander rather than GM Levy.
 19 The decision to send SM Berry was as a result of a
 20 discussion by the flexi-duty officers stood by at
 21 Manchester Central fire station, which included
 22 GM Levy."
 23 Is that right? I thought it was as a result of what
 24 Mr O'Reilly said that Mr Berry was sent?
 25 A. No, sir, it's my recollection that there was

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1 a conversation — there may well have been
 2 a conversation between the officers at the RVP about who
 3 should go. There may be a conversation between them and
 4 either Mr Fletcher, Mr Etches or Mr Nankivell, I really
 5 don't know.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You're not directly there but we'll need
 7 to look at that evidence. That doesn't accord with my
 8 recollection.
 9 MR COOPER: Paragraph 105, please. Again, a matter that we
 10 considered and I'll put it under the title of perception
 11 of relevance to the Fire Service:
 12 "I recall that my colleague, Dave Keelan, attended
 13 a multi-agency debrief. He relayed to me that at that
 14 debrief ACC Russ Jackson of GMP had commented that there
 15 was no requirement for fire to be at the arena or words
 16 to that effect. I think this comment identifies the
 17 difference in the appreciation of GMFRS capabilities
 18 between GMP and, for instance, NWAS. NWAS were able to
 19 articulate to GMFRS, via their Bronze commander, what
 20 specific resources were required from GMFRS in the
 21 emergency response."
 22 It's a matter for the chair but there seems to be
 23 certainly a theme developing, accurate or not, for the
 24 lack of appreciation by the police of the important
 25 assistance that the Fire Service could provide and

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1 here's another example of it. Do you find this
 2 a problem or did you find it a problem at the time?
 3 A. Yes, sir. I think if they had an appreciation of what
 4 resources we had and what capability we had, they may
 5 have asked for it.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think this is slightly a "heads you
 7 win, tails you lose" because on the one hand, the police
 8 are not appreciating what the Fire Service can do which
 9 they should do; NWAS do and they're getting a bit of
 10 criticism for actually telling the Fire Service what to
 11 do.
 12 MR COOPER: It may be something I can develop in written or
 13 oral submissions but — I would have a response now, but
 14 perhaps I can better give it on a later occasion.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It might not be polite.
 16 MR COOPER: Again, my able and learned junior will make
 17 a note of it to remind me.
 18 I just want to deal now, please, as I conclude, as
 19 I always do, with just highlighting the debriefs and
 20 your observations in relation to things that went wrong
 21 and highlighting them for us. So a number of documents
 22 just to flag.
 23 {INQ004260/5}, please. There again is a well-known,
 24 well-understood format here. I'm just going to ask you
 25 about three. The second one, for instance:

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1 "Application of national protocols around the
 2 discretion of NILOs to manage the incident and
 3 deployment of resources during the first approximately
 4 30 minutes of an incident without the knowledge of the
 5 duty principal or assistant principal officer."
 6 What do you mean by that?
 7 A. Within the national NILO policy, and it was GMFRS policy
 8 at the time, where there was an incident and the NILO
 9 was informed, the NILO had discretion essentially for
 10 30 minutes from that incident developing to do what they
 11 saw fit, what they felt needed to be done, before any
 12 need to have any kind of conversation with either a duty
 13 principal or assistant principal officer. So you've got
 14 the potential for things to be developing at an incident
 15 without the most senior officers in the organisation
 16 being aware.
 17 Q. So you're saying that's a bad thing, are you, in terms
 18 of this 30-minute discretion?
 19 A. Yes. I'm aware that subsequent to the arena incident,
 20 and I'm not sure what happened with national policy, but
 21 GMFRS changed its policy.
 22 Q. Again, I'm just selecting three of these. The
 23 penultimate bullet point:
 24 "Decision-making in the command support room being
 25 based on speculation regarding what was required rather

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1 than fact."
 2 What do you mean by speculation?
 3 A. Decision-making is probably the wrong word. I think
 4 we've already touched on it: this was all about the
 5 discussions around whether or not to send the SRT.
 6 Q. All right. {INQ004260/7}, please, of that document.
 7 This is a list of things that you felt went right;
 8 is that right?
 9 A. Yes, sir.
 10 Q. "Interaction between services when at the scene"?
 11 A. When they were all actually at the scene.
 12 Q. Oh, when they all finally got there?
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. I'll leave that.
 15 {INQ000286/2}, please, a Kerslake conversation. Can
 16 we look, please, at the sixth bullet point:
 17 "Was command structure clear on the night? No, not
 18 at first."
 19 What do you mean?
 20 A. There wasn't a command structure in place until we
 21 actually attended the scene, sir.
 22 Q. So that's what you mean there, yes?
 23 A. Yes, sir.
 24 Q. I just want to explain the rather ambiguous answer you
 25 gave to the last bullet point:

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1 "Have things settled down now? I believe so as
 2 people have had their say but some will not contribute
 3 as it takes away their ability to complain in other
 4 forums" —
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm keen not to get into
 6 a union/management dispute if at all possible.
 7 MR COOPER: If that's what it means then —
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is that what it does mean?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 MR COOPER: I'll move on. I hadn't really grasped that,
 11 thank you.
 12 Again just dealing with the debriefs, {INQ004498/1},
 13 this was a debrief of 12 July 2017. By cross-reference,
 14 and if I'm wrong I'm sure will be put right, to assist
 15 the chair when he considers this document, if we can go,
 16 I should say, to {INQ004498/3}. You may not know, but
 17 you're number 22.
 18 A. I don't know.
 19 Q. You don't know. Well, we've cross-referred and if we're
 20 wrong, we can correct that. We believe you're number 22
 21 as far as that is concerned. And looking at that to
 22 take this thing swiftly, are there any observations
 23 there that you wish to comment on? Again, to refresh
 24 your memory, you're number 22.
 25 (Pause)

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1 And over the page {INQ004498/4}, please. There for
 2 instance is the repetition in the second box of what
 3 you've just told us about the 30-minute point which may
 4 reassure you that you are 22.
 5 A. Yes, sir.
 6 Q. "Multi-agency communication under command and control."
 7 You say this under that:
 8 "The multi-agency communication issues meant that
 9 the GMFRS RVP was at a different position to other
 10 emergency services" —
 11 A. That's just referring to police and ambulance mustering
 12 at Manchester Central, whereas we mustered at
 13 Philips Park.
 14 Q. Thank you. There's a plethora of debriefs. One more
 15 I want to take you to —
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, if you're moving over, can I take
 17 the last one:
 18 "Decisions were being made in the CSR rather than
 19 at the incident."
 20 And you appear to be agreeing with that.
 21 A. It's an issue that on reflection — I know in my
 22 statement I'm pretty clear that decisions weren't
 23 actually being made in the CSR. I think it's fair to
 24 say on reflection that they were.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.

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1 MR COOPER: {INQ004498/10} — actually, there's one more
 2 page, please, Mr Lopez. Next page {INQ004498/11}.
 3 Anything else there that you want to comment on?
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't think he's involved in any of
 5 those.
 6 MR COOPER: I don't think you are, 22. I'll move on.
 7 I just want to take you to something that was said
 8 by Mr Simister, finally, to see whether you agree with
 9 what he said. {INQ030902/4}, please.
 10 There at the bottom, in the bottom quarter he says
 11 this:
 12 "Why are we hiding behind policies and procedures
 13 when we have the capability? I could have told you all
 14 the information we needed. I could have spoke to
 15 a senior paramedic and the police and by not being
 16 there, I couldn't. You couldn't get in touch with the
 17 FDO because he's busy and we've got nothing by the
 18 policies. That needs to change."
 19 Really I've got two questions. One is, do you agree
 20 with what Mr Simister said there?
 21 A. I do in part. The policies — the principles of JESIP,
 22 for example, I completely agree with, but the principles
 23 of JESIP weren't actually applied on the night. Had
 24 they been applied, I think we would have had a very
 25 different response to the incident, particularly from

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1 GMFRS. So in that context, I disagree with him.
 2 I think what he was alluding to was, I think, in his
 3 language, hiding behind policies, people seeking to
 4 rigidly apply policy rather than just get on and do
 5 something (overspeaking) —
 6 Q. That's what I was going to ask you (overspeaking).
 7 A. In that context I agree with him.
 8 Q. That was my last question. In fact, what he's saying
 9 here is that the organisation is too risk averse. Would
 10 you agree that the organisation, the Fire Service, on
 11 the night of 22 May 2017, was too risk averse?
 12 A. Yes, sir.
 13 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much.
 15 MR GREANEY: Finally, I'm going to ask Ms Johnson if she has
 16 any questions and I can she that she doesn't. I don't
 17 have any further questions, sir.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 19 Thank you very much for your evidence. You've given
 20 a different perspective, which will help me to consider
 21 the complete picture. Thank you.
 22 A. Thank you.
 23 MR GREANEY: Sir, the next witness will be Mr Pilling, who
 24 will be giving corporate evidence on behalf of Greater
 25 Manchester Police. Mr de la Poer will be calling him,

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1 so we will need, and would in any event need, a short
 2 break but perhaps no more than 10 minutes.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I reassure people that we are not
 4 going beyond 4.30.
 5 MR GREANEY: And we are not going beyond Mr de la Poer's
 6 questioning in any circumstances.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right, thank you.
 8 (2.44 pm)
 9 (A short break)
 10 (2.54 pm)
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Pilling, I'm sorry you've been messed
 12 about with times and I have no doubt you've been messed
 13 about today as well and I'm very sorry about that.
 14 A. It's no problem at all, sir.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm grateful for that.
 16 MR IAN PILLING (sworn)
 17 Questions from MR DE LA POER
 18 MR DE LA POER: Please can you state your full name?
 19 A. Ian Pilling.
 20 Q. Are you the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester
 21 Police?
 22 A. I am.
 23 Q. Deputy chief constable, you told me before you came in
 24 today that there was something you very strongly wanted
 25 to say before we begin and I'm going to give you the

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1 opportunity to say that now.
 2 A. Thank you.
 3 I would like to offer condolences from Greater
 4 Manchester Police to all those who lost loved ones, who
 5 suffered injuries or hurt, or have been affected in any
 6 way by the tragic events at the Manchester Arena in
 7 2017. I know that Chief Constable Ian Hopkins has
 8 personally met many of the families of those who lost
 9 loved ones to offer personal condolences. Our thoughts
 10 and my thoughts remain with them.
 11 The response of so many of our staff, particularly
 12 first responders, on the night was exemplary,
 13 extraordinarily brave and quite humbling. I'm very
 14 grateful for the chairman's acknowledgement of that.
 15 However, I would also like to acknowledge and
 16 apologise for failings by Greater Manchester Police,
 17 principally failing to carry out the basic functions of
 18 JESIP in the early stages of the incident, which
 19 impacted considerably on joint working. Our failure to
 20 notify other emergency services of the declaration of
 21 Plato and failure to establish effective inter-service
 22 communications was unacceptable and we apologise for
 23 this unreservedly.
 24 This is an apology not just to the victims and the
 25 families but also to all those affected by the attack,

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1 including our emergency services colleagues. And as
 2 I've explained in my statement, significant work has
 3 been done to address many of these issues and I would
 4 like to give absolute assurance that efforts to address
 5 these failings and any others which are identified will
 6 continue in the future.
 7 Thank you, sir.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 9 MR DE LA POER: Deputy chief constable, you have given five
 10 witness statements to this inquiry; is that right?
 11 A. It is, yes.
 12 Q. Although I'm often unreliable on maths, I'm sure you'll
 13 accept it from me that they total 170 pages?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. In addition, you have provided a 54-page document
 16 entitled "Schedule of recommendations"?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. Which contains a total of 93 separate items. So that
 19 everybody understands, that schedule of recommendations
 20 will be published, so far as it's possible to do so,
 21 within the bounds of operational sensitivity, on the
 22 inquiry's website so everyone can see that and I will
 23 not need to take you through that line by line.
 24 So that everyone understands the structure of my
 25 questioning, as I've explained to you already, we are

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1 going together to look at some of the issues which have
 2 arisen in the course of the inquiry as being matters of
 3 interest to the chairman.
 4 Next, we are going to have a look at what has been
 5 done at a high level to address those issues and,
 6 finally, we are going to, or I am going to, give you an
 7 opportunity to assist the chair with any recommendations
 8 that you might have on behalf of Greater Manchester
 9 Police.
 10 Before we come to those three topics, let's just
 11 introduce you briefly. Did you join the police service
 12 in 1990?
 13 A. Yes, I did.
 14 Q. Was that Lancashire?
 15 A. It was, yes.
 16 Q. Did you subsequently have a period in Merseyside?
 17 A. That's correct, yes.
 18 Q. Did you join GMP from Merseyside?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. When did you join GMP?
 21 A. It was the January of 2016.
 22 Q. You joined GMP as the deputy chief constable?
 23 A. That's correct, yes.
 24 Q. So far as 22 May 2017 is concerned, you did not have any
 25 role in the emergency response; is that correct?

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1 A. That's correct. I attended headquarters from home and
 2 I took on various roles around welfare support and
 3 planning for the next few days, but I didn't actually
 4 have any operational command of the incident on 22 May.
 5 Q. So far as events since that day are concerned, in July
 6 of 2020, did you become the chair of the strategic
 7 organisational learning board?
 8 A. I established that group and became the chair of it,
 9 yes.
 10 Q. We'll come back to that in my part 2.
 11 Two more dates. December 2020. Upon the
 12 resignation of former Chief Constable Ian Hopkins, did
 13 you become the acting chief?
 14 A. I did, yes.
 15 Q. Did you hold that position until May 2021, when you
 16 reverted to your previous rank on the appointment of
 17 Stephen Watson?
 18 A. That is correct, yes.
 19 Q. That's all I intend to say by way of introduction.
 20 We'll turn now to my first and most substantial
 21 topic, deputy chief constable, issues which have arisen
 22 in the inquiry. We will just begin with a general
 23 observation, namely has the process of the inquiry led
 24 to further relevant information coming to GMP's
 25 attention?

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1 A. Yes, it has.
 2 Q. We'll return to that in terms of what is being done
 3 about that in my part 2. I would like to begin in terms
 4 of the substance of this section in dealing with the
 5 question of austerity, which is something that you deal
 6 with in some detail in your fifth witness statement.
 7 I'm going to read a passage and if you want to have
 8 a look at the statement, you may do so. It is
 9 paragraph 5 of your fifth witness statement:
 10 "I wish to make it clear that I do not seek to use
 11 austerity and the cuts as a reason or excuse for many of
 12 the areas where we should have done better."
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. Does that capture accurately your position as you sit
 15 there today on oath?
 16 A. It does, yes.
 17 Q. You provide a considerable amount of further detail
 18 around austerity. I'm going to ask for two pages of
 19 your statement to be shown so that members of the public
 20 and those listening can see what the position was in
 21 terms of GMP's capability.
 22 {INQ041506/3}. This is the information you provide
 23 in your witness statement and we can see that there is
 24 a reduction in total income from 2010 through to the
 25 year that we are focused on, 2017 to 2018.

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. At the bottom, we can also see that there is a reduction
 3 of police officers, just over 2,000, between 2010 and
 4 2017.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Over the page, please {INQ041506/4}. Staff presumably
 7 meaning civilian staff?
 8 A. That's correct, yes.
 9 Q. Again, we see a reduction in the numbers. And PCSOs,
 10 a similar trend, 2010 to 2018, although it seems that
 11 the numbers were about the same in 2017.
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Thank you very much indeed, Mr Lopez.
 14 So that's information that you've provided. You've
 15 provided that in the context of the statement which
 16 you have just said remains your position. What you say
 17 at paragraph 15 — again, follow along if you wish to,
 18 is:
 19 "GMP was forced to make difficult decisions to
 20 achieve the required efficiency savings whilst
 21 maintaining front line services and some of these
 22 decisions resulted in reductions and restructuring in
 23 relevant functions which are being considered by the
 24 Manchester Arena Inquiry."
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. Your subsequent paragraphs, as I read them, identify two
 2 areas in particular; am I right about that?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. Firstly, in the planning department?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. And there do we cast our minds back to Katrina Hughes,
 7 who gave evidence before Christmas, who worked in the
 8 planning department and spoke about challenges she
 9 raised in updating plans?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. The second area you identify is licensing. Again, do we
 12 cast our minds back to the content of the chairman's
 13 volume 1 report?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. Which arising from the evidence before Christmas and
 16 identified problems with the enforcement of the
 17 licensing system?
 18 A. Yes.
 19 Q. So that is relevant to that volume 1 issue.
 20 Were there any other areas, so far as you have been
 21 able to ascertain, where those reductions that we've
 22 seen produced in the table had a bearing on any issue
 23 relevant to the inquiry?
 24 A. Yes. From evidence that I've heard, I believe the
 25 firearms policy and compliance unit also lost a number

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1 of staff .

2 Q. And there, are you referring to a topic that I will

3 return to, but which I will summarise as the

4 Giladi/Whittle plan issue?

5 A. I am indeed, sir .

6 Q. Finally on the topic of austerity, your paragraph 49,

7 please, which is how you conclude this section:

8 "I am aware I have described substantial investment

9 [which is the case in other parts of your statement] in

10 key areas within GMP. Having done so, I reiterate my

11 points at paragraph 5 that I do not seek to use

12 austerity and the cuts for many of the areas where we

13 should have done better but I would like to highlight

14 that as reinvestment has taken place in GMP we have

15 sought to use the additional funding wisely and in areas

16 which we believe will make an operational difference and

17 improve the service we provide. Certainly, the funding

18 has directly enabled us to strengthen areas like the OCB

19 and create the FOC."

20 OCB?

21 A. The control room for all intents and purposes, the

22 operational communications branch.

23 Q. So far as that as a topic is concerned, you know that

24 Chief Superintendent Clements, whose area this is, is

25 going to assist the chairman in relation to the

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1 developments that have occurred in the OCB since, and so

2 that is not a topic that I will be asking you about.

3 And FOC?

4 A. That's the force operations centre, which is the unit

5 that's been established within the control room now in

6 support of the force duty officer and the force critical

7 incident manager.

8 Q. Again, a topic for Chief Superintendent Clements?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. So having received your evidence about the extent to

11 which austerity had an effect, so far as you have been

12 able to ascertain, I would like to turn, please, to what

13 lesson-learning there was before the attack. You will

14 know, deputy chief constable, that the inquiry has spent

15 a substantial amount of time considering Exercise

16 Winchester Accord.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Are you sighted on the very recent statement of, I think

19 he is, Superintendent Openshaw?

20 A. I am, yes.

21 Q. So that is further information for the inquiry to

22 consider. I'm not going to take you through that, save

23 to refer to one very small aspect when it becomes

24 relevant. But from your position of overview and

25 speaking for your organisation, whose responsibility is

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1 it ultimately that lessons were learned from Exercise

2 Winchester Accord?

3 A. I think from any exercise, the exercise planning and the

4 debriefing and the coordination of any recommendations

5 is done by the resilience forum, or a subgroup of the

6 resilience forum, albeit by their nature those

7 recommendations and actions are given to a particular

8 individual and he or she will be responsible for

9 actually carrying those recommendations out, whilst

10 ultimately it is the chief constable who's ultimately

11 responsible. But I think from what I've seen, those

12 recommendations are allocated to an individual to carry

13 out, ultimately reporting back to the resilience forum

14 to ensure those recommendations have actually been

15 carried out.

16 Q. Are you satisfied, particularly bearing in mind the

17 content of the recent statement, that the resilience

18 forum were properly informed about all of the learning

19 that GMP had within it from Exercise Winchester Accord?

20 A. No, I don't think so. I think if I may, there's

21 probably a more general point around the way in which

22 debriefs are carried out and certainly that's been

23 something I've been keenly interested in during the

24 course of this inquiry as regards whether those debriefs

25 actually bring out the issues in an appropriate way.

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1 Because if they don't, then that's the vehicle that

2 drives the recommendations, so if those debriefs are not

3 bringing issues out — so I think that's an observation

4 I would make, if that answers the question, that it is

5 the debriefs that probably aren't bringing out the

6 correct level of information in the early stages.

7 Q. If the chairman was to find that issues which arose at

8 Exercise Winchester Accord, so far as GMP is concerned,

9 manifested again on 22 May 2017 to the detriment of

10 those who were affected, would that be a wholly

11 unacceptable state of affairs?

12 A. Yes, it would.

13 Q. Do you agree that there was ample time and opportunity

14 to put things right between Exercise Winchester Accord

15 in the summer of 2016 and May of 2017?

16 A. There was certainly time to take action. Whether there

17 was time to take the gold standard action, probably not,

18 because one thing in particular that we may refer to

19 later took some time, but I think as regards putting

20 things in place, yes, that would have been enough time

21 for the majority of actions.

22 Q. Next, the HMIC inspection, and in particular the matter

23 that ACC Hankinson spoke to earlier this week. I would

24 like just to bring up the email, {INQ041272/1}. We

25 looked at this with her. At the very bottom of page 1,

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1 we can see her email is 3 November 2016 in the evening,
 2 and it is addressed to the chief_officers@gmp.police.uk,
 3 which no doubt is an email group. Were you a recipient
 4 of emails to that group?
 5 A. Yes, I was, on that day, yes.
 6 Q. If we go over the page {INQ041272/2}, we can see:
 7 "Areas for development identified by HMIC. Is there
 8 enough resilience around the FDOs in the event we have
 9 an MTFA—style incident?"
 10 And you will be very familiar with the way in which
 11 that goes on.
 12 I'm not inviting any comment upon what passed
 13 between ACC Hankinson and Mr Buchan, but that was an
 14 email that you, among others, received?
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. Whose responsibility was it to make sure that that was
 17 addressed between November 2016 and May of 2017?
 18 A. Sorry, what particular issue was addressed?
 19 Q. Building in resilience around the FDO.
 20 A. Within GMP or at a national level?
 21 Q. Within GMP.
 22 A. Any action would have been the responsibility of
 23 ACC Hankinson and the senior leadership team within the
 24 OCB to deliver.
 25 Q. From what you have seen of the evidence, was there

1 sufficient resilience around the FDO on the night of
 2 22 May?
 3 A. I believe that if certain things had been in place or if
 4 actions had been allocated in a certain way by the FDO,
 5 then in terms of the numbers of people, the resilience
 6 around him, then I believe, yes, there was.
 7 Q. So does it follow from that answer that the reason that,
 8 if it be the case that he was overwhelmed, which is
 9 a word that has been used a lot about him, that that was
 10 a personal failing on his part for not accessing
 11 what was available to him?
 12 A. I think there are probably a couple of parts to that
 13 answer because, clearly, the action cards had been
 14 thought about and had been circulated by email to the
 15 key staff. There is a list of actions for the force
 16 duty officer. I wouldn't use the term "overwhelmed"
 17 personally. I think that certainly, with delegation,
 18 preferably with the action cards, but even possibly
 19 without them, to certainly make sure that a significant
 20 number of those actions, which are very straightforward
 21 in many cases around making a telephone call to
 22 a specific individual or individuals and passing some
 23 very simple information or setting up a radio channel
 24 were perfectly achievable through effective delegation.
 25 The action card would have made that process more

1 effective, but even without them, I believe a good
 2 proportion could and should have been delegated to
 3 individuals within the control room.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: One thing that I think would strike most
 5 people as extraordinary is that the press came through
 6 to the FDO's phone line.
 7 A. Yes.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I know that doesn't happen now. Wasn't
 9 that something which could have been thought of before?
 10 A. I think it could, sir, yes. I know that having listened
 11 to the evidence, on the night the FDO asked somebody to
 12 answer his telephone, which was a very sensible thing to
 13 do. But taking your point entirely, I think there were
 14 some things that could have been identified and that is
 15 a good example of one of them which could have reduced
 16 that demand significantly.
 17 As you said, it has changed since, as have many
 18 things, but that is one area where, yes, we could have
 19 reduced demand on the FDO.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 21 MR DE LA POER: Do you think that the system of delegation
 22 was adequately embedded by 22 May 2017?
 23 A. No. I've referred to the action cards previously and
 24 they'd been written, they'd been circulated, but they
 25 hadn't been embedded, and they weren't used on the

1 night, clearly. So what that meant was we were reliant
 2 on the FDO delegating and delegating to staff who may
 3 not have been entirely familiar with what they were
 4 being asked to do. I still think it was achievable, but
 5 obviously it would have been to a much better standard
 6 had the action cards been in place.
 7 Q. I think we need to be clear about where we land then.
 8 If the resilience was available but not embedded so far
 9 as the person who was going to be put under that
 10 enormous pressure spontaneously, was that then a failure
 11 by GMP to ensure that what was being said in
 12 November 2016 materialised in practice?
 13 A. Do you mean as regards the action cards?
 14 Q. In regards to building resilience around the FDO to
 15 avoid them becoming overburdened or overwhelmed.
 16 A. Yes, I mean, clearly the recommendation isn't more
 17 specific. As I recall, it was "more resilience" and so
 18 it's what you interpret that as. I know the response of
 19 that recommendation was around the circulation of
 20 a different telephone number, so it's quite difficult, I
 21 think, to work back as to what prompted that
 22 recommendation. So as regards resilience, no, the
 23 action cards hadn't been embedded.
 24 Q. And should they have been?
 25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Was that a failure?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. I'm going to turn to the resilience forum, which I think
 4 we can deal with very briefly. At paragraph 81 of your
 5 fifth statement, and the context of this comment is
 6 observations made by the policing experts instructed by
 7 the chairman, about the attendance at the
 8 Greater Manchester Resilience Forum by officers of
 9 appropriate seniority, what you say starkly there is:
 10 "GMP acknowledges there should have been more
 11 consistent attendance by chief officers at GMFRS
 12 meetings."
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. A theme that is the subject of investigation is whether
 15 or not, whether through JESIP, through the resilience
 16 forum or through both working together, it was
 17 adequately embedded in those responding to think of
 18 their emergency service partners. You understand
 19 that is something that's being investigated and many
 20 people have been asked about that so far as their
 21 perspective was concerned. Did the failure to send
 22 officers of appropriate rank to the Greater Manchester
 23 Resilience Forum reveal the fact that, at that time, GMP
 24 was not placing enough emphasis on that joint working?
 25 A. No, I don't think it does. I think the joint working --

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1 I've never seen any evidence in day-to-day activity that
 2 that has been lacking in any way. Certainly since I've
 3 been in GMP for 6 years now, I've never noticed any
 4 deficiencies in day-to-day partnership working, just the
 5 opposite, in fact.
 6 However, we should have had more of a chief officer
 7 presence to chair that meeting, and I think what that
 8 could have done is perhaps portrayed that there wasn't
 9 that level of strategic oversight. I genuinely think
 10 that we were bought into the resilience forum, I think
 11 what I have seen as regards evidence shows that we were
 12 involved, but ideally we would have had a better
 13 representation at ACC level, as we'd undertaken to do.
 14 Q. By your last answer, do you accept that you can
 15 understand why people might infer from the lack of
 16 senior officers or sufficiently senior officers going
 17 a lack of engagement? But your position is if people
 18 draw that conclusion they are wrong?
 19 A. I think there's inevitably likely to be a perception --
 20 I think those who were around the table, I hope, would
 21 have seen that we, as GMP, were very much engaged with
 22 the process, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't
 23 have had the right level of representation.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It may be that it's not only the rank of
 25 the officer attending but actually consistency of the

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1 same person.
 2 A. Yes.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is that possible to achieve bearing in
 4 mind the various portfolios that chief officers have and
 5 their other responsibilities?
 6 A. I think we would never get to every meeting, sir, but
 7 I would hope that we would get to the majority of
 8 meetings at that level with an acceptance that because
 9 of the very reasons you have just outlined, 100%
 10 attendance wasn't possible. But I think, looking
 11 back -- and it may well be that it was a perfectly good
 12 reason and evidence that I've heard indicated it was
 13 that people could attend, but I take the point entirely,
 14 that that can give the perception that we've got not the
 15 buy-in at the right level.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm less concerned about perception than
 17 the reality, really. It's important that if the person
 18 who's designated to attend can't attend, whoever is
 19 there reports back to them properly and actually that
 20 the person who was due to attend -- and we're all guilty
 21 of this -- takes the trouble to make sure they know
 22 exactly what was discussed and what had to be done.
 23 A. Absolutely, sir, absolutely.
 24 MR DE LA POER: Is that something that -- it's perhaps an
 25 artificial question bearing in mind who the chair is of

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1 GMRF at the moment, but is that what the chairman's
 2 saying there about not just achieving rank, but also
 3 consistency, somebody taking ownership of it, somebody
 4 taking a genuine interest in it, so that it is
 5 a professional passion of theirs, is that now embedded
 6 in GMP?
 7 A. It is, yes. I point to evidence of the COVID pandemic
 8 and the response of the resilience forum to that as
 9 being really strong evidence of where it is working very
 10 effectively.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Perhaps passion could be an
 12 overstatement.
 13 MR DE LA POER: I did describe it as professional passion
 14 but I take your point, sir.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, keenness on the issue, anyway.
 16 MR DE LA POER: I am going to turn away from the resilience
 17 forum now and ask you about plans. We're still dealing
 18 with matters relevant to preparedness for the attack.
 19 We've already adverted to this, the Giladi/Whittle plan
 20 issue. I'll ask the question baldly and you can give me
 21 an answer: how was it that GMP got itself into a state
 22 of confusion about which Operation Plato plan was in
 23 force?
 24 A. The situation is -- I can't excuse the situation. There
 25 should never have been any confusion over which plan was

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1 in place, given it being such an important plan. As to
 2 how that happened, I don't know. I won't make an
 3 excuse. I think the process is quite complex as regards
 4 JOPs and then national plans translating to local plans,
 5 so it is quite a convoluted process, but I don't use
 6 that as an excuse. There should have been absolute
 7 clarity as regards which plan was in place at the time.
 8 Q. What steps have GMP taken to ensure that never happens
 9 again, whether with Operation Plato plans or any plan?
 10 A. We have strengthened the firearms compliance unit with
 11 a chief inspector and this is an area that I took some
 12 keen interest in as the national guidance changed in
 13 December, and I've scrutinised the response of that unit
 14 as regards what they did. I'm very satisfied that the
 15 processes that are now in place are much improved and
 16 would prevent that from happening again.
 17 So the instruction that came out to all firearms
 18 commanders in January was very clear, that on a day, it
 19 was 5 or 6 days in the future, this is the new plan,
 20 this is what's coming in, these are the new documents —
 21 and there's a table which shows which documents are no
 22 longer relevant and which the new ones are — here is
 23 a summary of the plan with everything in it that has
 24 changed in a colour-coded way that you can read through.
 25 I think it delivers absolute clarity and you can be

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1 under no illusion whatsoever as to when that plan is
 2 transitioning, what the new plan is, and what the
 3 differences actually are.
 4 That was then followed up by more wider
 5 communication using the force intranet for
 6 non-specialist responders.
 7 So the process now is very much improved and there's
 8 actually been, very recently, a further SOP, operating
 9 procedure, written which shows how new plans are
 10 actually brought into play, so that it's — I'm always
 11 conscious of it not being just one person's sort of idea
 12 so there's now a plan in place, which is very clear
 13 about how new SOPs will be introduced and I've
 14 personally examined that over the last few weeks.
 15 Q. What may be thought permitted potentially two live plans
 16 to exist at the same time and potentially be unaware of
 17 each other is the fact that there didn't seem to have
 18 been a rigorous process of handing down the plans once
 19 they were implemented. I acknowledge that one of the
 20 plans was highly proximate to the attack itself.
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. But is that a fair way of characterising what was the
 23 position before May 2017?
 24 A. There wasn't the clarity, I think, if that's what you're
 25 asking, as regards which plan is in place and which one

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1 isn't. There wasn't the clarity in my view of the
 2 communication sent out in May with the new draft plan on
 3 it. It wasn't clear in my mind the details of the
 4 transition. All the things I have just said are now in
 5 place. It wasn't clear.
 6 Q. In terms of accessibility of plans, we know that
 7 an issue has arisen that it has never been
 8 Inspector Sexton's account that he thought to access
 9 a plan to consult it on the night. I don't need to know
 10 the detail of it, but can you give an assurance that
 11 such plans are readily accessible and are developed in
 12 a way that means that they can be read during
 13 a spontaneous incident and the relevant information
 14 accessed?
 15 A. Yes. The plans are on the intranet and accessible.
 16 There's a broader point about accessing plans
 17 because there's far too many of them and too much in
 18 them. So I think there's a piece of work to do
 19 nationally and within GMP around making it much clearer
 20 which the relevant plan is for what you're dealing with.
 21 Sometimes it's completely obvious, for a Plato for
 22 example, but even that has brought in a wider
 23 conversation about the major incident plan, for example.
 24 To answer your question: yes, there is a much more
 25 straightforward process, but I think there is still

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1 a lot of work to do around how you are realistic with
 2 a commander as regards what plan he or she draws down
 3 on, depending on what their role is at a particular
 4 time, particularly a time of extreme stress and response
 5 to a major event.
 6 Q. An issue raised by the policing experts, which I will
 7 seek to formulate in this way: plainly in slow time,
 8 having detail which is accessible to those who might
 9 need to know it is important?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. But in response to a spontaneous incident, a person is
 12 not, practically speaking, going to be able to read
 13 128 pages to find the bit that applies to them?
 14 A. No.
 15 Q. So has GMP been giving thought to the fact that plans
 16 really have to have two parts, one for the major points
 17 that need to be in mind in response to a spontaneous
 18 incident, and perhaps the detail that lies behind it to
 19 be read in preparation?
 20 A. Yes. We've not got a product yet. I have a personal
 21 view that I've started to share with others whose
 22 expertise I value that the ideal would be that if you
 23 were the Silver commander, for example, you would pull
 24 out a plan called Silver commander, and that would be
 25 very simple and you'd be able to have a look through as

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1 regards the kind of event that you were actually dealing
2 with and that would tell you what to do.

3 So rather than having to look through five or six
4 plans, each one of them will have a section about the
5 Silver commander, so in the major incident plan, the
6 force command module plan, the Plato plan and so forth,
7 you would have a Silver plan.

8 That's going to involve an awful lot of work.
9 I think it would need some national discussion and
10 consideration, but I think that's the only way in which
11 we can cut through the sheer volume of information in
12 a time of emergency and crisis and give that commander
13 the clarity that he or she needs.

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think many people who have been
15 watching this inquiry would take the view there are too
16 many plans.

17 A. Yes.

18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You clearly have the same view. So one
19 question is: what is being done about that? The other
20 is: is there a temptation when an incident like this
21 occurs to try and avoid it in the future, we write
22 a whole lot more plans rather than actually making sure
23 people make the right decisions at the time?

24 A. I think that is absolutely accurate, sir, and I would
25 agree with it: we tend to plan our way out of what's

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1 happened and write a bigger plan or introduce another
2 plan which actually is counterproductive. We haven't
3 done anything yet, to be abundantly honest. I'm still
4 formulating my ideas, I have outlined what I think they
5 are, and it's an area that GMP and, I think, wider
6 policing needs to have a look at. It is just not
7 reasonable to expect somebody to read that number of
8 plans, particularly in a time of emergency.

9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So nationally who would have
10 responsibility for that?

11 A. It would be through the College of Policing, sir,
12 I would say in the first instance. They produce
13 authorised professional practice. But a lot of the
14 plans are locally owned through — the GMRF, for
15 example, owns the major incident plan. So it would be
16 at several levels.

17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are the College of Policing interested
18 in this issue?

19 A. I don't know, sir. I will take that up with them.

20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.

21 MR DE LA POER: Still on the subject of plans, which we just
22 have a few more matters to cover. One of the issues
23 which you've already adverted to is the point at which
24 on this night the Plato plan interacted with the major
25 incident plan.

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1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And the fact that there exists a risk that someone might
3 reach for the major incident plan and not the Plato plan
4 and thereby find themselves reading material that is
5 perhaps not properly focused on what they need to be
6 thinking about. I'm sure you recognise that that is
7 a risk. The major incident plan that was in force
8 at the time didn't acknowledge that complexity so far as
9 Operation Plato is concerned; would you agree with that?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Have steps been taken to at least address that in the
12 short term?

13 A. I'm not sure about that, exactly what's been done. The
14 focus has been very much on Operation Plato plans and
15 being clear about what's required of officers engaged on
16 that. I would have to check on that so I'm not sure.

17 Q. Under my heading of plans, we're just going to consider
18 what has been a substantial matter of debate, namely
19 what GMP should do in response to a similar incident so
20 far as a Silver commander, by which I mean a commander
21 at the tactical level, who is in charge of the unarmed
22 assets.

23 Have you followed the two sides of that debate as it
24 has unfolded within the paperwork and evidence?

25 A. I have, with interest, yes.

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1 Q. One of the things that Superintendent Openshaw indicated
2 in his recent statement, and I know that core
3 participants will be taking the weekend to read that, as
4 it has only very recently become available, one of the
5 things that Superintendent Openshaw fed back, having
6 been the ground—assigned tactical firearms commander at
7 Winchester Accord, was that he ended up being
8 distracted — that's my word, he uses the word
9 "detracted" — from his role of ground—assigned tactical
10 firearms commander by addressing unarmed policing issues
11 such as cordons —

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. — and triage. So do you agree that before the attack
14 in May 2017, at least one GMP officer, who was very well
15 placed to say this, was raising a concern about whether
16 or not placing unarmed responsibilities on the
17 ground—assigned tactical firearms commander created
18 a problem?

19 A. I wasn't aware of anything being raised by an individual
20 in that regard.

21 Q. Have you seen that statement now?

22 A. I'm not sure which one you refer to, I apologise.

23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's all right. This is as a result
24 of an enquiry I made with Mr Horwell as to the question
25 about problems with that particular operation. In

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1 explaining that, how it came about that people were
 2 moved up late, he also went on at a later stage to say
 3 what his feedback was, that he thought it didn't help
 4 him being the ground—assigned firearms officer to be
 5 expected to look after the unarmed officers as well, and
 6 doing both jobs was really just not satisfactory. That
 7 was his feedback.
 8 A. Okay.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Similar feedback has come from 22 May.
 10 A. Okay. I wasn't aware of that. I thought you were
 11 referring to another statement other than Mr Openshaw's.
 12 I think as regards the issue, I absolutely agree.
 13 My operational experience doesn't make me surprised that
 14 the ground—assigned TFC had a lot to do. I think that
 15 ground—assigned TFC role is outlined within Plato,
 16 I think there are a few different issues at play. Would
 17 you like me to talk about the Silver commander? Is that
 18 okay?
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Absolutely. Are we dealing with the
 20 dispute between Assistant Chief Constable Ford and
 21 Mr Dexter as to what they're actually meant to be doing?
 22 A. I think what they were meant to be doing I have one view
 23 on, but I don't think it's what should happen. I think
 24 things should be changed. In my mind, my view is that
 25 under Plato the ground—assigned TFC is in charge of

1 resources at the scene, both armed and unarmed, but
 2 I don't think that is right. I think what experience
 3 has shown is that that is too much for one person.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do you think it's clear in ops?
 5 A. I think it's the heavy inference towards it. It doesn't
 6 mention another person.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 8 A. For me, and I have to say as well — would you like me
 9 to deal with the Silver commander issue first or talk
 10 about the ground—assigned?
 11 MR DE LA POER: You have given this some thought, you take
 12 it in the order that you think is going to make more
 13 sense.
 14 A. Right. So I think on the night, the correct thing for
 15 the Silver commander to do was to go to the Silver room.
 16 Because I — in my experience and all the events that
 17 I've seen and been involved in, you need that
 18 coordination at force level in the Silver command room
 19 alongside the equivalents from the Fire Service, from
 20 NWS, from BTP, and as regards the way in which the
 21 22 May unfolded from TfGM, Network Rail, et cetera, that
 22 Silver commander role for me is really pivotal.
 23 It's also important because it starts to take things
 24 away from the FDO, for example, the establishment of the
 25 casualty bureau could have passed into Silver. So the

1 effective running, as quickly as possible, of the Silver
 2 command room, I think, is absolutely critical. That's
 3 why I think it was the right thing to do for the Silver
 4 commander to go there.
 5 I'm aware, you've alluded to it, that the major
 6 incident plan indicates perhaps not. Equally, the force
 7 command module plan indicates that they should. So
 8 there is certainly an inconsistency as regards what they
 9 should do. But my professional opinion is that's where
 10 they should have gone to be able to perform their role
 11 most effectively.
 12 At the scene, the ground—assigned TFC, as I said,
 13 took on the unarmed and armed assets. What I think
 14 needs to happen is there needs to be an additional role
 15 at the scene, and I thought about whether that's an
 16 equivalent to the GATFC at the same level. I think,
 17 after some thought, it isn't, I think it's somebody who
 18 reports to them, but it's somebody who worked with the
 19 ground—assigned TFC and their role is to coordinate all
 20 unarmed staff.
 21 I think, having heard the evidence and examined the
 22 evidence from 22 May — and I have to say that I think
 23 Mike Smith, for example, did a first-rate job, but
 24 he was so busy dealing with the enormity of the scene
 25 that he wasn't able to take a back step and coordinate

1 things more widely.
 2 Again, I'm aware that somebody stepped in to do the
 3 outer cordons, but again for me what it needed was —
 4 you call it a senior Bronze or whatever — to work with
 5 the ground—assigned TFC, really clear: "I'm the GATFC,
 6 I am doing the armed assets", "I am the senior Bronze, I
 7 am doing the unarmed", and we'll work together to make
 8 sure that what happens, you know, happens effectively.
 9 As I say that's just my view. I have tested it with
 10 some trusted individuals and I think that's probably the
 11 best way of sort of taking things forward. The
 12 arrangement now, certainly on nights, is that the Night
 13 Silver commander ordinarily works in the force
 14 operations centre, which is within headquarters, which
 15 is actually next to the FDO. So I think even more so in
 16 the future, that individual will be able to set up the
 17 Silver room more quickly. I have not changed my view
 18 that that's what they should have done and where they
 19 should have gone, but I do absolutely take the point, as
 20 Mr Openshaw and Mr Dexter highlighted, it is an awful
 21 lot to do if you're the ground—assigned TFC and I think
 22 there needs to be a change.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do you mind if I take you out of your
 24 plan, while I think of it, otherwise I'll forget it?
 25 As we know, the police did prescribe a rendezvous

1 point. In fact, nobody went there as it happens. It
 2 was done by Inspector Smith. It was never — didn't go
 3 through anyone in a command role, ie the FDO never saw
 4 it, as far as I know, and never confirmed that it was
 5 the RVP. It does seem Inspector Smith did a very good
 6 job, so this is not a criticism of him. Should he be
 7 doing that or should he be recommending it and then it
 8 being actually approved and set out by the FDO as being
 9 the RVP?
 10 A. I think the RVP has to be set very quickly and I think
 11 the only person who can set it in the first instance is
 12 the FDO, always accepting that it's based on potentially
 13 limited information at that stage. Then what I would
 14 expect is that the commanders from the police, the fire,
 15 the ambulance, would go to that RVP and would then make
 16 an assessment. They'd do two things. Make an
 17 assessment if that RVP was in the right place or not,
 18 should it be further away, should it be nearer, is it
 19 big enough, and from that set the FCP and then move
 20 forward to that.
 21 So that for me starts off as a job for the FDO, but
 22 it becomes a job for the tri-service, or the
 23 quad-service if you include BTP, once they've got to the
 24 scene.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The difficulty about Inspector Smith

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1 doing it, in a way, is he's got — okay, he's on the
 2 scene but he does have limited knowledge of the overall
 3 picture, doesn't he?
 4 A. Yes. I think there's an inevitability that there will
 5 be a lack of knowledge in the early stages which is why
 6 the tri-service communication is really important until
 7 we get people co-located. I just think you have to
 8 trust people to get together and make those joint
 9 decisions. But again I make absolutely no criticism of
 10 Inspector Smith, but he was very heavily committed
 11 within the City Room and I think that goes back to my
 12 earlier point that it needed somebody else as well as
 13 Inspector Smith to take that backwards scene(?).
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's procedure I'm talking about not
 15 individual criticisms in any way. He did actually
 16 change it to Hunts Bank but it doesn't appear that was
 17 ever recorded on a police computer anywhere. So in fact
 18 NWAS did go to Hunts Bank but whether as a result of
 19 that or just coincidentally I have absolutely no idea.
 20 The RVP is absolutely critical to these operations
 21 working?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And it just did not work at all?
 24 A. No. I'm surprised at that because it is something we do
 25 all the time with our emergency service partners: we set

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1 an RVP and people go to it for many, many kinds of
 2 incidents — and I'm thinking firearms incidents but
 3 it's broader than that.
 4 So as I said before, I think the failure around the
 5 inter-service communication in the early stages didn't
 6 help because I think if people had been on the same
 7 radio they would have been talking — an "On my way to
 8 the cathedral, see you there" kind of conversation — so
 9 even though it had been transmitted as that's where it
 10 was, I accept, sir, that it didn't happen like that in
 11 reality.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 13 MR DE LA POER: If it has worked so many times in the past
 14 successfully, what was it, so far as you can tell, about
 15 22 May that meant that it completely failed for
 16 everybody, that RVP issue?
 17 A. There's certainly issues as regards the way in which it
 18 was — I think it was communicated out, the way in which
 19 it was then understood and shared within other agencies
 20 was an issue. But I think in real, practical terms,
 21 there was an urge by police officers to get into the
 22 scene and to start to do what they needed to do.
 23 I don't criticise that for one minute, I think that's
 24 human nature and they want to get in there. But I think
 25 that immediacy of wanting to do something as well

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1 probably drew people away from the RVP.
 2 Q. So is that a training issue so that people are told: we
 3 know this is how you are going to feel, but we need to
 4 practice this and practice this so that at least one
 5 person has responsibility for not doing that?
 6 A. I think so. I think it goes back to the point I made
 7 earlier around another individual because that person
 8 will be responsible for the RVP, somebody to watch
 9 Mike Smith's back in this case, somebody who would have
 10 been at the RVP. I think that's where that extra role
 11 potentially comes in.
 12 It's really difficult to sit here, years on, to get
 13 in the minds of people dealing with the most
 14 unimaginable situation. But as I try to look at the
 15 evidence objectively using my experience I think that
 16 would help things.
 17 Q. Last plan point. It's a very narrow one but it emerged
 18 from the evidence of Mike Smith. If we just bring it
 19 up, the plan, to illustrate the point. This will be the
 20 most efficient way to do it.
 21 {INQ007279/70}. As we do so, let me as knowledge,
 22 as we did with Inspector Smith, that the
 23 Bronze commander is a role which is identified within
 24 this plan — {INQ007279/21} for anyone who looks at it.
 25 I am not suggesting that role isn't there, but when one

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1 has a look at the appendices here for the core roles , do
 2 you agree that it is striking that the Bronze commander
 3 is not identified ?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. You may recall, if you have seen it, my questioning of
 6 Inspector Smith where we found ourselves in a surreal
 7 place where the only relevant plan was the inner cordon
 8 manager, which was plainly not something that he should
 9 have been concerning himself with.
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. Do you agree?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Why do you think that that was overlooked?
 14 A. I don't know. The Bronze commanders are trained
 15 specifically . They attend a course, I don't know if it
 16 was perhaps considered that their attendance on that
 17 course would give them the requisite knowledge to be
 18 able to perform that role, but I'm hypothesising.
 19 I don't know the answer to that.
 20 Q. Has it been fixed?
 21 A. Not to my knowledge, but I will enquire, certainly
 22 alongside the other issue relating to this plan and
 23 Plato as matter of urgency and ensure that things have
 24 been actioned and put into place. I'd be more than
 25 happy to update the inquiry in that regard.

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1 Q. Thank you.
 2 First aid training. Are you aware of the evidence
 3 of Brigadier Hodgetts?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. Then you will know that he has, for many years, been
 6 campaigning that ordinary citizens are taught how to
 7 apply a tourniquet.
 8 A. Mm—hm.
 9 Q. Because from all of his very considerable knowledge and
 10 experience, he recognised that, firstly , that was
 11 something which was very easy to teach and something
 12 which was capable of saving lives. Do you agree that's
 13 a fair summary of his evidence?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. The evidence the inquiry received is that the majority,
 16 to put it at its lowest, of police officers responding
 17 to this had not received such training as part of their
 18 first aid training. Again, do you agree that's a fair
 19 summary?
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. Can you just help us to understand how it could be that
 22 there exists this campaign for what is a very
 23 straightforward matter for ordinary citizens and yet
 24 police officers who are perhaps more likely to find
 25 themselves needing such skills than your ordinary

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1 citizen , that GMP officers hadn't had that training by
 2 2017?
 3 A. Yes. My understanding is that we followed a specific
 4 criteria within a module -- module 2, I think it was --
 5 and it wasn't within that module.
 6 Q. Where did that module come from?
 7 A. I think it was prescribed by the College of Policing but
 8 I'm not 100% sure.
 9 Q. So is the point you're making that, in fairness to GMP,
 10 it appears that the national position was in 2017 that
 11 that did not form part of the curricula
 12 for (overspeaking) --
 13 A. That's my understanding of module 2, yes.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's not actually just things like bombs
 15 going off; it's dealing with excessive bleeding
 16 anywhere.
 17 A. Yes, traffic accidents, yes.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Absolutely. Police officers certainly
 19 come across excessive bleeding, stabbings.
 20 A. Absolutely, I agree, sir .
 21 MR DE LA POER: Next topic. Awareness --
 22 A. Sorry, I beg your pardon. Were you going to ask me
 23 about the position now? They are now trained.
 24 Q. We had in fact received that evidence from other people,
 25 but you're right to point that out.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And real frustration from police
 2 officers who were there on the night that they didn't --
 3 A. I know.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And if anyone has had the misfortune to
 5 watch the body-worn camera images, they're going round
 6 crying out for paramedics, partly because they don't
 7 know what to do themselves.
 8 A. Absolutely, I know.
 9 MR DE LA POER: My next topic, deputy chief constable, is
 10 awareness on the part of GMP officers of the capability
 11 of partner emergency services and, in particular , given
 12 the evidence, the capability of the Fire and Rescue
 13 Service.
 14 Again, you've plainly followed closely the evidence
 15 of Inspector Smith, who on any view was dealing with an
 16 awful lot , but he gave us evidence to the effect that he
 17 didn't notice the absence of Fire and Rescue Service, it
 18 didn't occur to him to query their absence, and he did
 19 not know what they were capable of doing.
 20 A. Mm—hm.
 21 Q. Do you agree that's a fair summary of what he told us?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. We come back again to that theme that we're exploring
 24 about whether or not it was truly embedded in people's
 25 minds, and in particular as you're here to answer for

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1 GMP, GMP officers' minds and GMP at a senior level, to
 2 think about partner working.
 3 How can it be the case that a police inspector who
 4 joined the police in 1990, had a huge amount of
 5 experience, and otherwise acquitted himself very well,
 6 and I'm not suggesting any criticism of him in this
 7 regard, didn't know that?
 8 A. I can only say because we hadn't informed him of that.
 9 I know he had attended some limited JESIP training, but
 10 clearly that hadn't informed him of that, so there was
 11 a real gap there, certainly, I think, as regards the
 12 capabilities of the Fire Service. I think the ambulance
 13 is probably more widely known because the working is
 14 more frequent. But I think there was admittedly a gap
 15 in the knowledge of what the Fire and Rescue Service
 16 could contribute.
 17 Q. Is that something that GMP should have been making
 18 absolutely clear to its staff before May 2017?
 19 A. I think it's certainly something that should have been
 20 included within the JESIP training so that staff had an
 21 awareness of the capabilities.
 22 Q. Was it unacceptable that it wasn't included?
 23 A. I don't know if I'd say it was unacceptable. I think
 24 there are an awful lot of things we have to train
 25 officers in and make them aware of and with hindsight

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1 that is something they should have been made aware of
 2 and I wish they had and I think we all wish they had, so
 3 it should have been the case.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is it part of the national training?
 5 A. Not to my knowledge, sir, but I have not had the
 6 national training.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's all very well to say it's
 8 important, that everyone who's involved in the rescue
 9 services talks together, but unless you know the
 10 capabilities of the other rescue services -- if there's
 11 a fire, you expect the Fire Service, but they do a lot
 12 more than that as a rescue service as well. If you
 13 don't -- it's no good talking if you don't know what
 14 they can do really.
 15 A. No, that's why we've sort of made the video last year
 16 that the resilience forum commissioned, which is
 17 obviously for all three services and it shows in a lot
 18 of detail what each service can do. It has been widely
 19 circulated within GMP and as a result of that I think
 20 there's been a significant increase in the knowledge of
 21 officers as to what NAWAS can bring, certainly in terms
 22 of the HART as well, as to what their additional
 23 capacity is and also the Fire Service and in particular
 24 what the SRT can bring. So I would accept that there
 25 was a gap in the knowledge but it's one that I think

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1 we've worked hard and imaginatively to jointly
 2 commission that video so everyone is now aware.
 3 MR DE LA POER: That's a video that was launched in February
 4 of this year?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Some might ask why it's taken until February 2021 to
 7 start addressing that knowledge gap. What was the
 8 prompt for creating that video?
 9 A. I think it's as it became -- and it's not the only thing
 10 we've done. The joint training that is done between
 11 ourselves and Fire and Rescue and ambulance has really
 12 picked up -- there's a new series of that that's due to
 13 start on 22 July. There was a series which took place
 14 earlier this year. So we've started to train a lot more
 15 collaboratively, so it's not the only thing. I think
 16 it's probably a realisation of the gravity of the
 17 problem as we started to look at the evidence from the
 18 inquiry.
 19 Q. I'm now going to turn to the night itself and just ask
 20 some questions about the evidence that we've received
 21 from, in particular, senior GMP officers. Again, I'll
 22 state the question in stark terms: deputy
 23 chief constable, how could it be that a superintendent,
 24 who was Night Silver, did not know what Operation Plato
 25 was at a time when the national threat level was severe

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1 and had been so for some time?
 2 A. He should have known and he didn't know because he had
 3 not been trained in Operation Plato.
 4 Q. How can that situation have come about? How did it come
 5 about?
 6 A. Well, my recollection, and from looking at the evidence,
 7 is that the training in Operation Plato -- I'm not
 8 saying this is right, I'm just trying to explain -- was
 9 at that time confined to pretty much the specialists,
 10 particularly from the firearms environment, who would be
 11 required to fulfil firearms command roles. What hadn't
 12 happened is it hadn't been rolled out more widely across
 13 GMP, so obviously the situation that Mr Nawaz wasn't
 14 aware of it arose and, as I say, it should have been the
 15 case, looking back, that he should have been aware of
 16 it.
 17 Q. We have received evidence that officers of very junior
 18 rank within British Transport Police knew what it was.
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. So whatever secrecy had been cast around it at one time
 21 had been lifted and lifted for some time, do you agree?
 22 A. It would appear so.
 23 Q. So do you agree that it was unacceptable that Mr Nawaz
 24 didn't know what Operation Plato was?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's actually not -- are we going on to
 2 others as well?
 3 MR DE LA POER: I was going to ask about Mr Smith who's next
 4 and then some questions about the firearms officers as
 5 well.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There were a number of unarmed officers,
 7 as I recall it, and we may be coming to them, who also
 8 didn't know anything about Plato and because they are
 9 going to be first on the scene, isn't it quite important
 10 they do know about it?
 11 A. I think so, sir, yes and you have mentioned Mr Smith and
 12 obviously there are a small number of individuals who
 13 had key roles who should have been aware of at least
 14 what it was and (overspeaking) --
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do they have to be key roles? I was
 16 really thinking of real rank and file. I mean, it may
 17 not be necessary, so what's your view about it?
 18 A. I think it's about a tiered response and I think what
 19 you need to know depends on the role that you're
 20 performing. So I would expect Mr Nawaz to have
 21 a greater knowledge than perhaps an attending response
 22 crew. And we've tried to -- we have invested a lot over
 23 the last couple of years in Plato and JESIP training.
 24 We've again just recently been re-thinking that and
 25 we've put it all into a video and that video is designed

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1 for what I would call bulk viewing by front line PCs and
 2 PCSOs, but we give inspectors a full day every year --
 3 and superintendents.
 4 I think it's about everybody needs to know but what
 5 you need to know depends on the role you're actually
 6 doing.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 8 MR DE LA POER: We have also received evidence, which was
 9 not always consistent, from different firearms officers
 10 about their understanding of Operation Plato. Have you
 11 followed that detail?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Again, was that an acceptable state of affairs?
 14 A. As regards the not having complete knowledge, so just
 15 I'm clear about the question? Is that as regards
 16 whether or not it was applicable only to a firearms
 17 attack or was it to the zoning aspect or to something
 18 else?
 19 Q. There was divergence depending on who was asked about
 20 it. In other words what might be the trigger of it,
 21 what might form part of it, how you approach zoning. We
 22 heard, for example, from Chief Inspector Buckle who, as
 23 we know, never took up a command role that night, but in
 24 her case she was not asking about what the zones were,
 25 she was not asking about whether it's been reviewed, and

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1 she was at the time embedded in the incident but with
 2 time and space compared to other people in command roles
 3 and yet that was her position. She wasn't alone
 4 in that, I'm not just singling her out, but she perhaps
 5 illustrates the point I'm making.
 6 Was it acceptable for that divergence in
 7 understanding about what was absolutely critical to the
 8 police response that night?
 9 A. No, it wasn't, albeit within JOPs 3 -- my reading of
 10 JOPs 3 is you start off thinking it is clearly about
 11 firearms and then, as you read through it, it sort of
 12 has a bit about how it might include explosives.
 13 I think it's not black and white, albeit the MTF title,
 14 the firearm, the F aspect here indicates(?). So as
 15 regards that I think there's got to be a little bit of
 16 flexibility because I think that's where JOPs takes you.
 17 I think as regards how the zones were defined within
 18 Plato, for a firearms officer or commander, then they
 19 should have absolutely known about the hot/warm/cold
 20 zones and the definition of them.
 21 Q. Have you noticed, as part of the evidence, that the
 22 contemporaneous recordings don't appear to involve a lot
 23 of discussion about the zones, do they?
 24 A. No.
 25 Q. And everybody knowing what the zones are is absolutely

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1 critical to the success of Operation Plato, do you
 2 agree?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. Nor is there captured contemporaneously substantial
 5 discussion on a regular basis about reviewing the zones?
 6 A. No.
 7 Q. Again, that is essential to the success of Plato and
 8 both of them are capable of making a life-and-death
 9 difference for people caught up in it, do you agree?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. So where does responsibility lie? Is it within GMP
 12 in the training, is it at a national level, or how can
 13 it be that people who had passed the courses, were
 14 competent so far as their qualification was concerned
 15 would yet nonetheless be thinking about those
 16 life-critical questions?
 17 A. As regards firearms officers and firearms commanders
 18 then the curriculum is nationally -- it's taught locally
 19 and quality assured regionally. That, I think, is
 20 a different answer to Mike Smith, for example, which was
 21 a GMP decision. So I think it depends who you are
 22 referring to.
 23 Q. I was there meaning to capture the firearms officers who
 24 had responsibility for defining the zones, understanding
 25 where the zones were, reviewing the zones.

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1 A. What I'm unable to say is whether it is because of the
 2 content of the national products or whether it's to do
 3 with the way it was delivered. I can't say that. But
 4 the actual curriculum is -- my understanding is it is
 5 nationally established.

6 Q. Can you at least agree that it is an unacceptable state
 7 of affairs that there was there that lack of discussion
 8 about such important matters?

9 A. About zones?

10 Q. About zones and the reviewing of zones, the
 11 communicating of them?

12 A. Yes, there should have been much more clarity around the
 13 zones, and I think that probably goes back to the point
 14 we discussed a few minutes ago around Mike Smith not
 15 being trained in Plato as the person on the ground
 16 initially, but I accept there should have been better
 17 clarity around the zones.

18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: At the time, while the City Room
 19 remained a hot zone, would that at the time have
 20 required firearms officers to remove any rescuers who
 21 were working there?

22 A. If it had been a hot zone, my understanding is that
 23 only --

24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Don't worry about the point now. I want
 25 to know on 22 May.

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1 A. Are you referring to what policy says or as regards the
 2 decisions that were taken --

3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, I'm talking about what policy says.

4 A. The policy was only firearms officers should operate in
 5 the hot zone.

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that for people coming up
 7 behind. That's how you think of Plato, don't you?
 8 Firearms officers go in first, clear the zone, make sure
 9 it becomes a warm zone, and then you have the
 10 appropriate people coming into that.

11 But actually in real life it's much more likely to
 12 be what actually happened here: firearms officers
 13 arrive, there are a lot of badly injured people, dying
 14 people there, members of the public, very courageous
 15 police officers -- and let me again pay tribute to some
 16 of the evidence we have heard which has been extremely
 17 moving about what they did and other people helping as
 18 well. Would the policy require the firearms officers
 19 while it remained a red zone, hot zone, sorry, to clear
 20 them all out?

21 A. My recollection of the Plato, sir, is yes, it would. My
 22 recollection is that the only flexibility allowed for
 23 civilians and unprotected police officers is around
 24 a warm zone. That's what I think. I'm pretty sure
 25 that's what Plato said, so they should have been

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1 removed.

2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. That may be because it's never
 3 been thought of.

4 A. Yes.

5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Which if it -- it's very difficult to
 6 say to members of the public who are doing their best to
 7 save people's lives, "You have to go", because they may
 8 just say, "I'm not going, thank you, I'm staying".

9 A. I think the other way of looking at it, if I may, is how
 10 do you make it not a hot zone any more very quickly, how
 11 do you get it to warm? That's the other way of looking
 12 at it because the sooner it can be declared warm the
 13 sooner the flexibility --

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I absolutely understand that and I also,
 15 from my present impression, not having heard all the
 16 evidence and all the submissions about it, take the view
 17 the fire (sic) officers went in there very quickly and
 18 they had cleared it extremely quickly and it was capable
 19 of becoming a warm zone very quickly. Unfortunately,
 20 no one bothered to declare it a warm zone very quickly,
 21 which is one of the major problems.

22 That's how it's meant to work but the practical
 23 problem of what do you do when people are treating
 24 people, badly injured people, at the time the firearms
 25 officers are clearing it, are they going to stop

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1 clearing them and say, "You've all got to get out before
 2 we carry on with our job, would you leave the room"?

3 A. I think practically they're not.

4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Why didn't anybody think about it?
 5 That's not GMP's fault, it's JOPs', maybe, sorry.

6 A. It goes back to the earlier point: I think the
 7 temptation is to wrap even more rules around this thing
 8 because people want clarity but then when you actually
 9 get to the live situation it's those very rules that
 10 were to bring clarity that hinder and I'm not sure what
 11 the answer is other than it needs looking at.

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There is a problem and people need to
 13 look at the answer because, as is pointed out in JOPs,
 14 this is all covered by Article 2, the right to life and
 15 the need to protect life and the obligation there is.
 16 As has now been pointed out several times, JOPs actually
 17 refers to it as being not an absolute duty under
 18 Article 2, whereas, as I understand the European
 19 Convention of Human Rights, it is. But that must mean,
 20 mustn't it, that if policemen come into a situation
 21 where they know there is danger for people they somehow
 22 need to inform them of that?

23 A. Yes.

24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And I just wonder whether these things
 25 are being thought about.

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1 A. I don't know, sir. But I think one of the things that
 2 I've taken away from this inquiry so far is around Plato
 3 and it needing a good dose of looking at. That's not
 4 trying to be clever after the event, because it is
 5 a very complex thing, but that very point you have made
 6 I think needs to be looked at and we'll take that up
 7 nationally if that's what you're agreeing with us today.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we may have some further
 9 evidence from people who know about the separation of
 10 JOPs.
 11 MR DE LA POER: Certainly after the summer break we're
 12 expecting to hear from Mr Thomas from CTPHQ who knows
 13 a lot about the MTA policy as it is now.
 14 One last topic of substance which we have perhaps
 15 already dealt with, which is JESIP, and we'll just
 16 headlined these. As I'm sure you will be able to agree
 17 on behalf of GMP, the approach to ensuring
 18 a multi-agency RVP was unsatisfactory, do you agree?
 19 A. Yes. Sorry, can I just -- I think as regards -- in the
 20 early stages, the decision by the FDO was clear as to
 21 where the RVP was and it was communicated. I think what
 22 happened thereafter as regards the RVP not being used
 23 wasn't appropriate.
 24 Q. We can go to the detail then. When you said FDO,
 25 I think you might mean Mr Smith who nominated the RVP

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1 over the radio.
 2 A. Well, the first -- from my recollection, the first
 3 nomination of the RVP at the cathedral came from the
 4 control room into North West Fire Control is my
 5 recollection.
 6 Q. It came from Inspector Smith actually over the radio.
 7 Within 2 minutes he had countermanded it and said
 8 Hunts Bank. It has -- no GMP assets went there, perhaps
 9 because, they heard the radio broadcast, although so far
 10 as the GMP control room operators were concerned we know
 11 that Mr Myerscough was still telling other emergency
 12 service partners approaching midnight that the cathedral
 13 car park was the RVP and that there was, if you take
 14 a step back, I'm sure you'll agree, within that first
 15 hour to hour and a half, insufficient effort put in to
 16 ensuring that all emergency service partners co-located
 17 at a rendezvous point.
 18 A. Yes.
 19 Q. And GMP must accept a share of responsibility for that?
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. And as the primary partner in the terrorist response GMP
 22 was expected to take the lead with that wasn't it?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. (Inaudible: distorted) RVP then.
 25 FCP, the forward control point. Do you agree that

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1 within that first hour, if not a little longer,
 2 certainly until Chief Inspector Dexter was able to
 3 correct the situation that the approach to the FCP was
 4 unsatisfactory?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Which again is a support for what you're
 7 saying about having someone in charge of unarmed assets
 8 because what you'd expect Mr Dexter to do is to go
 9 forward with his people to make sure that the hot zone
 10 is cleared before he comes back to what is hopefully
 11 established as the forward control point to tell
 12 everybody who's now assembled there happily to say:
 13 right, you can now go in, it's a warm zone.
 14 A. That's exactly right, sir. It's about having that place
 15 where people come together as the forward command point.
 16 MR DE LA POER: Mr Smith was fully occupied with what he was
 17 doing and I think you're not suggesting that that was
 18 his responsibility in that situation.
 19 A. No.
 20 Q. When Chief Inspector Dexter arrived, he was the most
 21 senior GMP officer along with others on scene at the
 22 rank of inspector?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. And do you agree that a possibility, if not
 25 a probability, is that if an FCP had been established

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1 together with an RVP, the absence of Fire and Rescue
 2 Service would have been identified much earlier than it
 3 was?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. And that had the potential at least to lead to their
 6 being contacted specifically for the purpose of telling
 7 them come forward?
 8 A. I don't know what the nature of the communication might
 9 have been but certainly if there'd been co-location with
 10 the fire, ambulance and police at an FCP and RVP then
 11 the conversations would have taken place. I think
 12 whether they'd been called forward or not would have
 13 depended on the assessment of risk, jointly agreed at,
 14 as prescribed within JESIP.
 15 Q. That comes on to the next matter, which is jointly
 16 assessing risk.
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. Do you agree that within the first hour, the approach to
 19 joint assessment of risk was unsatisfactory?
 20 A. I think it was satisfactory between GMP and the
 21 Ambulance Service, but not satisfactory as regards all
 22 JESIP partners.
 23 Q. Well, let's just examine that answer. Who were the
 24 personalities between NWS and GMP who jointly assessed
 25 risk?

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1 A. I think Mr Ennis and Inspector Smith.
 2 Q. Mr Ennis and Inspector Smith?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. So to your mind, that was adequate?
 5 A. No, it wasn't as good as it should have been. It should
 6 have happened at a FCP. I think what I'm saying is
 7 there was evidence of it as regards the discussions they
 8 had. Was it as good as it should have been? Absolutely
 9 not because there wasn't an FCP and fire were not
 10 present.
 11 Q. We know that although you've described it as a joint
 12 assessment of risk between the two of them, whilst it
 13 was true for Mr Ennis that he continued as an
 14 unprotected non-specialist to remain in the zone, the
 15 rest of NWAS did not move forward save for the protected
 16 specialists despite the fact that Mr Smith regarded it
 17 as safe enough for all the unprotected police officers
 18 to remain.
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. So that, would you agree, doesn't sound like a joint
 21 assessment of risk because it appears that they've taken
 22 different things away from that conversation?
 23 A. Absolutely. I think there was a discussion and they
 24 reached an understanding between the two of them. Was
 25 it as good as it should have been? I'm not saying it

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1 was, absolutely not.
 2 Q. The sharing of situational awareness at the scene.
 3 Again, in the first hour, do you agree, unacceptable?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We did have the situation where unarmed
 6 police would go in to — regard it was safe for them to
 7 go into the City Room. By and large the paramedics
 8 regarded it not to be safe even to come up the stairs to
 9 the next level. The Fire Service, when they arrived,
 10 decided it wasn't safe enough for unprotected officers
 11 to go into even the casualty clearing station.
 12 A. Yes.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So three different forces reaching
 14 a different assessment of the risk. How do we get over
 15 that?
 16 A. I think there are two ways to get over it with some
 17 support. So I think it's the right location, first of
 18 all, so I think the RVP and then once the RVP is
 19 established, the FCP. It's about then getting the right
 20 people to the FCP from each of the three or, if you
 21 include BTP, four agencies. So you actually get them
 22 at the same point talking to each other. But in the
 23 run-up to that, it's about the activation of the
 24 communications channel, the Airwave radio, so even
 25 before there is physical co-location, there is

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1 conversation between the four individuals that are going
 2 to the scene and the four relevant control rooms, so
 3 those conversations are taking place.
 4 I think the quicker those conversations can take
 5 place, so the quicker that channel is activated, the
 6 better chance we've got of getting that co-location of
 7 the right people in the right place.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And perhaps clearer advice — this is
 9 sounding critical of Mr Dexter, who I really don't want
 10 to criticise at all, he seems to have done a really good
 11 job while he was there, in my initial view anyway. But
 12 things like, "Well, it's warm going cold", and,
 13 "coldish", not tremendously helpful.
 14 A. No. Again, I share your view, sir, that Mr Dexter did
 15 a good job. I think there is some issues there as
 16 regards the Plato definition of the zones, which are
 17 absolutely black and white and it wasn't, because
 18 I think as regards the City Room, clearly as regards the
 19 threat from — the terrorist wasn't a threat any more
 20 but what couldn't be ruled out was the suspicious
 21 package or a secondary device. But that secondary
 22 device could have been as likely to be on the station
 23 concourse or at Piccadilly Station as in the City Room
 24 and I think that'll be what's in his mind: well, it
 25 looks safe, the firearms officers have said it's safe

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1 because the terrorist is dead, but I'm not quite sure
 2 what else I've got. I think that's where that looser
 3 language came in.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just an impression one might get from
 5 the inquiry is that zones were not just not considered
 6 important enough and the people were thinking there's
 7 a Plato at the arena whereas actually, and I think
 8 Mr Dexter said this: really, the Plato affected the
 9 area.
 10 A. Yes.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What you then need to know was the
 12 zoning at the arena because then we've got people
 13 talking about, "I'm suspending Plato", and the
 14 difficulties of rescinding Plato because of the
 15 consequences of doing that.
 16 A. Yes, and I think Plato itself, because it does attract
 17 certain other resources in —
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm aware of the problems.
 19 A. — which would have been needed and the other things,
 20 sir, I know you are well aware of is obviously the
 21 potential incident at the hospital in Oldham, for
 22 example.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I have no problem of you thinking Plato
 24 applies to maybe the whole of Greater Manchester. My
 25 concern is if you're going to say that, (inaudible), you

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1 actually need to be reviewing the zones really regularly
2 and very carefully .
3 A. I agree, sir, and that wasn't done as efficiently as it
4 should have been in those stages.
5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
6 MR DE LA POER: Do you agree, having just reviewed in
7 headline form all of those various well-established
8 aspects of JESIP, that there was a very substantial
9 JESIP failure on the night.
10 A. Yes, certainly within the first hour.
11 Q. What assurance can you give now that, were a similar
12 incident to occur, that those failures would not be
13 repeated?
14 A. Okay, so from the GMP perspective — and I'm probably
15 creeping into some of the lessons learned here. If I go
16 too far, please tell me. But the way in which the
17 resource now is established around the force duty
18 officer is a very highly skilled team of the assistant
19 FDO, the force critical incident manager, the force
20 operations centre staff, and team 3 that I know you've
21 heard about. They are a consistent group of 10 or 11
22 people, the action cards now are embedded, they've been
23 trained with, everybody knows what their role is.
24 And particularly, to answer your question around the
25 establishment of the inter-service channel, which there

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1 was available at the time, albeit the — I understand
2 the new system wasn't actually embedded, but that is
3 very much in place now. But it's not just about GMP, is
4 it? It's about how that works with other partners, and
5 as I alluded to before, the amount of training that's
6 done. The police have just worked with the Fire Service
7 between January and April around their MTF training for
8 their new commanders. On 22 July, another series of
9 inter-agency exercising takes place. So that's been
10 really stepped up as well. So there's lots been done
11 but, as I say, it's not just about us doing it for GMP,
12 it's got to work and — you know, things like the radio
13 channel being tested, all that sort of thing, which I
14 think puts it much more into the muscle memory than was
15 the case before, and I'm sure Mr Clements will explain
16 next week about some of the testing regimes and how that
17 actually comes together.
18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. I just want to take this up for
19 a moment. There are some people listening to this
20 inquiry who I know are getting fed up with the words
21 "lessons learned".
22 A. Yes.
23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But there we are, looking to see what
24 goes wrong. But in JESIP, this is particularly
25 relevant. The inquest into 7/7, which we were

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1 remembering the anniversary of — actually, I think you
2 were one year out, Mr Cooper, so I'm told.
3 MR COOPER: Yes, I was.
4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Anyway, that inquest identified the
5 problems in communication. JESIP is then developed and,
6 since then, we've had a number of inquiries which have
7 said JESIP didn't work. So I will come out, almost
8 certainly, because everyone's accepted it, JESIP didn't
9 work. How are we really going to accept that, when it
10 comes to it, it won't fail all over again?
11 A. I think we need to start, sir, by defining what it is
12 that we want from JESIP, you know, because I think it's
13 a term that's often bandied around. What do we actually
14 mean by it? And I think it means very different things
15 in the first hour of an incident to the first day to the
16 first week. I think it means different things in
17 a spontaneous to a pre-planned operation.
18 If I walk into the control room for a big
19 pre-planned event in Greater Manchester, I think JESIP
20 is absolutely working really well, you know, the people
21 are working together in the room, there's conversations,
22 joint decisions being made. So I think the problem is
23 around the spontaneous incidents, and I think, for me,
24 there's got to be an acceptance that within that first
25 hour as regards what can actually be achieved — but

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1 having said that, the five JESIP principles apply within
2 first hour, and it is around that coordination,
3 communication and co-location. We've talked about the
4 FCP, we've talked about the tri-service channel. When
5 you've got those, you can move to the shared situational
6 awareness and joint understanding of risk. But I think
7 it's just about, for me, understanding what it is we're
8 aiming for, and maybe JESIP is not clear enough in that
9 regard as —
10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, well —
11 A. — expectations.
12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, I've been a bit intemperate
13 sometimes talking about JESIP, and saying, well, do we
14 just throw it away and start again, because it hasn't
15 worked over a number of years.
16 A. Yes.
17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But what we are trying to achieve,
18 surely, in the first hour is: it has to be right —
19 A. Yes.
20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — that if you three forces all work
21 together, and with BTP four, you are actually going to
22 achieve a better outcome for those who are injured, or
23 who are dying, or who are survivors. You're going to
24 achieve a better outcome if you all work together?
25 A. Yes.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So that's what JESIP is all about and
 2 the first hour is perhaps the most critical time.
 3 A. Mm—hm.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So how am I going to be convinced that
 5 it's going — well, it's not really for me to be
 6 convinced. How is the public going to be convinced that
 7 it's actually going to work in practice?
 8 A. I can't answer that here and now, sir. Maybe I can give
 9 it some consideration. I do think we're pushing against
 10 an open door. I think Fire Service, Ambulance Service
 11 and ourselves all desperately want this to work and
 12 that's why there's so much effort gone into it. It's
 13 working in — it's not just working in exercise,
 14 actually, it's working in reality, not clearly,
 15 unfortunately, the same magnitude as the attack at the
 16 arena, but there have been serious incidents where,
 17 through our new structures and the training we've done,
 18 to be able to put things in place much more quickly.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I think it's fair comment to say
 20 perhaps we will hear when JESIP doesn't work, we don't
 21 tend to hear when JESIP does work.
 22 A. Yes.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So that is fair comment, but there are
 24 a fair number of these occasions when JESIP —
 25 A. There are, sir.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — has been found after an inquiry not
 2 to have worked.
 3 A. Yes.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: How critical to the failure — and let's
 5 forget about the reason — was the failure of the FDO to
 6 tell his — the rescue partners of Operation Plato?
 7 A. I think as regards the specifics around Plato — was
 8 important but not as important as the broader
 9 communication for me. I think there's a danger we get
 10 too drawn into the Plato, which was important, but for
 11 me that general conversation around what was happening,
 12 what the risk was, what we knew, where the RVP and the
 13 FCP were, and Plato were all important things. GMP
 14 should have informed the other partners that Plato had
 15 been declared, absolutely. But I think it is about the
 16 broader communications that should have been set up, of
 17 which Plato would have been a part.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 19 MR DE LA POER: I just have 4 minutes left, and I hope that
 20 I can deal with a couple of short matters, and I know
 21 I'll be thanked by others if I achieve that.
 22 We'll cut straight to it. The evidence of
 23 Ian Randall, and here we're looking at the arrangements
 24 to set up a Silver room in a spontaneous incident, was
 25 that there was no plan and no exercising as to which

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1 personnel would leave their posts and set up the Silver
 2 room. Wherever the policing experts land, and indeed,
 3 more importantly, the chairman lands on the timing of
 4 Mr Randall going and whether he was the right person,
 5 from a systems point of view do you agree that that is
 6 unsatisfactory, that there is no pre-plan as to who will
 7 go, and at what point, or within what range of time to
 8 set up the Silver room?
 9 A. At the time that was the case, yes.
 10 Q. Do you agree that's unsatisfactory?
 11 A. It was unsatisfactory, yes.
 12 Q. Has this been addressed?
 13 A. It has, yes. Very briefly, it is now a defined role in
 14 the force operations centre which, importantly, is in
 15 the same building as the Silver room now, that somebody
 16 will go and initiate the Silver command room.
 17 Q. The second of the three very brief topics I hope we can
 18 get through. Explosive search dog and handler
 19 availability. You deal with this in your witness
 20 statement. Do you agree that they had a vital role on
 21 the night to assist with declaring particular areas to
 22 be safe?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. And do you agree that a very substantial period of time
 25 elapsed before there were such dogs available on scene?

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1 A. Yes. I don't know what the time was, but I'll accept,
 2 it.
 3 Q. You have said in your witness statement that GMP is
 4 conducting a review of the capability that GMP has in
 5 light of the issues raised in the inquiry.
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. Is that review ongoing at the moment?
 8 A. It is, yes, and I won't tread into sensitive
 9 information, but we're looking at other approaches, for
 10 example a regional approach, simply because of logistics
 11 and availability and cost.
 12 Q. Finally, to complete those topics that I hoped to get
 13 through before it'll be handing over to Mr Greaney on
 14 Monday: specialist tactical firearms commander. There
 15 were only two such qualified people within GMP on the
 16 night?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. They were Mr Dexter and Mr Thompson?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. And both effectively stepped into the command chain in
 21 preference to those who might otherwise have been
 22 available —
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. — do you agree? And both have indicated that that
 25 specialism put them in a strong position to do so?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. Is this an area -- again, I'm not interested in what the
 3 current position is --
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. -- but is this an area that you can assure the chairman
 6 that GMP is looking at as a matter of priority in the
 7 light of their evidence about how important that was on
 8 the night?
 9 A. Yes, and looking at how that can be achieved, if not on
 10 a force footprint, perhaps wider.
 11 MR DE LA POER: Thank you very much indeed, deputy
 12 chief constable.
 13 Sir, I wonder whether that is a convenient moment to
 14 break.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What wonderful timing, yes.
 16 I'm sorry to have to ask you to come back.
 17 A. That's okay, sir.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Monday at 9.30. Thank you very much,
 19 everyone.
 20 (4.30 pm)
 21 (The inquiry adjourned until 9.30 am
 22 on Monday, 12 July 2021)
 23
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I N D E X

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