

Authority delays Taser rollout

The Metropolitan Police Authority has refused to give the go ahead to roll Tasers out in the force.

Senior Met officers learned of the decision at an MPA meeting late last month.

In a shock announcement, the MPA questioned the operational need for Tasers as well as the public perception of their use. The authority said it needed more detailed information from the force before it could allow the rollout to proceed.

Cindy Butts, MPA deputy chair, said: "The Authority previously agreed to the deployment of Tasers in London as an alternative to firearms, and undoubtedly their deployment to critical incidents have saved lives.

"However, the proposal brought to us was for Tasers to be used in addition to firearms, which is a significant development and one we were not happy to agree to without greater explanation of the implications and justification for this move."

The MPA deputy chair called for a more 'thorough' report to be presented at the October meeting.

"This will require a detailed business case, a clear indication that the Met has taken into account the concerns that London's communities will rightly raise, and a commitment to communicate how, when and why Tasers will be deployed in the future."

Taser has been available to all Authorised Firearms Officers since September 2004 as a less lethal alternative for use in situations where a firearms authority has been granted.

In July, the Home Office approved a 12-month trial of the deployment of Taser by specially-trained officers who are not firearms officers in violent circumstances requiring conflict management.

Representative nominated for top award

A federation representative is in the running for the prestigious Stonewall Hero award.

Greater Manchester Police Sergeant Julie Barnes-Frank has been short-listed for her work. She founded the Greater Manchester Police Lesbian and Gay Staff Affiliation in 1998. The organisation now offers 24 hour advice and support to LGB staff.

Sgt Barnes-Frank said, "I'm very surprised. It came completely out of the blue. I'm humbled and honoured that someone has taken the time to nominate me. Hopefully, it will heighten awareness of Gay and Lesbian issues in the force."

Sgt Barnes-Frank said both the force and the local federation had made progress in the last nine years.

"It helps that I'm here full time so if someone has an issue, they know they can talk to someone."

"It also comes down to individuals and their actions which are far greater than any legislation. It is people who attend Gay Pride marches and who are not afraid to be mistaken for being gay. They make the difference."

Ben Summerskill, Stonewall chief executive, said: "We're delighted at the range of lesbian and gay talent recognised by the awards shortlist. But we're equally delighted that so many people across the media and political worlds have been giving positive support to gay people too during the last year."

The awards ceremony will be held in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London on November 1st and will be accompanied by a champagne reception.

"I'm very nervous about the evening. I'm more used to the pub and the local chippie, but I'm looking forward to meeting Anthony Cotton," added Sgt Barnes-Frank.

The winners from six categories will be chosen by judges including Matt Lucas, Clare Balding, Nicky Campbell, Paul Gambaccini, Johnny Capps and Robyn Grew from Barclays.

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Shortlisted: GMP up for Stonewall Hero award

