1) Nick Herbert MP’s opening statement – key points

- He stated that the government values equality in the criminal justice system, and added that policing reforms are a very important part of the government’s agenda to decentralise power and put decision making powers “back in the hands of communities”.
- Speaking on the government’s Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill, he stated that the legislation reflects a “policing by consent” principle, which requires that police have legitimacy. He added that a key way to achieve this would be improved police accountability to local people, adding that the bridge between community and policing is crucial.
- He added that increasing democratic accountability is crucial for the government, as opposed to bureaucratic measures which have “added red tape and [eroded] discretion”.
- Nick Herbert stated that the government takes engagement with ethnic minorities seriously, and added that their recent approach to section 44 is a good example of this. He added that they are aware of disproportionality in other areas, especially section 1 and section 60 powers of stop and search.
- However, the Minister disputed the figure that black people are 26 times more likely to be stopped under section 60, arguing that 76% of section 60 stops happen in London. He added that when this fact is taken into account, the figure is significantly lower. He also added that the Metropolitan Police state that section 60 stops have “wide community support” and are “crucial” to reducing knife crime.
- He defended the government’s plans to scrap the stop and account form, stating that it is part of the government’s agenda to restore discretion and de-bureaucratise the police, but added that police forces can still choose to collect this information.
- Mentioning the first draft of the government’s revisions to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE), Nick Herbert stated that there was a “misunderstanding”
relating to its proposals to re-introduce ethnic profiling into section 60, and added that the government opposes such measures. The proposal was amended following consultation with a number of interested parties.

- He went on to say that the government is “committed” to ensuring that there is proper use of stop and search powers, and argued that the National Policing Improvement Agency’s “next steps” programme – welcomed by the EHRC – is helping forces to use their powers properly.
- The Minister acknowledged that more needs to be done to increase Black and minority ethnic (BME) representation in the police force and added that the recent freeze on recruitment “poses a serious challenge” to improving this.

2) Questions from parliamentarians and external observers

- **Baroness Whitaker** (Labour) raised the issue of Gypsies and Travellers in the criminal justice system, asking whether guidance on how to handle sites could be prioritised for publication. She also asked whether more data could be collected on Gypsies and Travellers in order to determine a clearer picture of their experience of policing. In response, Nick Herbert said a government review on Gypsies and Travellers is currently being led by the Department for Communities and Local Government and added that he does not know whether collecting policing data on these groups is feasible.

- **Lord Sheikh** (Conservative) stated that under-representation of ethnic minorities in the police force is not just a question of recruitment, but is also an issue of promotion and career development. He also expressed concern surrounding the increase of Muslims incarcerated in UK prisons. Nick Herbert agreed with Lord Sheikh’s point on recruitment and added that changes will not come through new laws but through cultural and attitudinal change.

- Referring to figures recently cited by Nick Herbert in parliament, **Kjartan Sveinsson** (Runnymede and StopWatch) argued that official statistics on how much time will be saved by reducing the amount of information recorded on a stop and search form are significantly higher than implied by the calculations of StopWatch. He asked the minister whether the government has looked at other means to save time and argued that if black people were stopped at the same rate as white people, the time savings would be in the region of 45,000 hours per year.

- Continuing on the theme of stop and search, **Ben Bowling and Mike Shiner** (StopWatch) asked a series of questions on whether there is strong empirical evidence of the impact of stop and search on crime reduction; the problems with “unprofessional discretion”; and whether the Minister will consider introducing a “thorough review” of section 60 authorisations.
In response to these questions, Nick Herbert stated that claims that time-saving figures are exaggerated cannot be accepted, but added that the numbers are being re-calculated as a result of StopWatch’s intervention. He added that as part of the reduction of recording requirements in stop and search, the “most important characteristics” remain untouched. Regarding evidence on the value of stop and search, the Minister stated that the Met has been clear that the impact of Blunt (or Blade) 2 has made the community safer, particularly in relation to knife crime.

Croydon MP Gavin Barwell (Conservative) argued that whilst community leaders are more supportive of stop and search, there is a lot less support among young people, who are more likely to be stopped and searched. Highlighting that disproportionality is prevalent in his constituency, he also argued that the actions of Safe Neighbourhood teams and TSG (Territorial Support Group) officers differ in relation to stop and search. Chairing the meeting, David Lammy MP reiterated this point, adding that he has been stopped and search by a TSG officer.

Jane Basham, Chief Executive of the Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Race Equality, argued that changes to stop and search will make the government unable to monitor repeat stops and asked the Minister to visit her local stop and search community group.

Dr Rebekah Delsol (StopWatch) criticised the government for not holding a public consultation on the changes to stop and search, and asked whether an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the proposals. In response, Nick Herbert said that there will be debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords on the issue.

Zin Derfoufi asked whether ethnicity data is available on Schedule 7, and criticized its current use. In response, the Minister said that the power is currently under review as part of the government’s overhaul of counter-terrorism measures. David Lammy MP suggested that a parliamentary question should be tabled on the issue.