



## **E: APPGDC INQUIRY INTO POLICING OF PUBLIC GATHERINGS, CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS, AND THE PCSC BILL**

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### **QUESTIONS FOR AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE**

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Many thanks for considering a submission to the inquiry. The APPG is seeking to understand whether and/or how important rights, including the right to free expression and peaceful assembly were respected and facilitated at the gathering that you attended. The APPG is interested in your views of the gathering and the events leading up to it.

The APPG would be grateful if you could include any documentary evidence (such as log-books, records, photographs, or recordings) to support or supplement your submissions.

You may wish to structure your response around the following questions:

- 1. Do you consider the law and guidance in place at the time to be sufficiently clear in respect of public gatherings for the purpose of protest/free expression/peaceful assembly during the coronavirus pandemic?**
- 2. In the week before the gathering what discussions were there between the police and organisers of the proposed vigil?** What was proposed? What did the police do or consider to facilitate the rights to free expression and peaceful assembly?
- 3. How did the police address the issues raised by the High Court's judgment on 12 March 2021?** While the judgment referred specifically to the Clapham Common vigil on 13 March 2021, it has implications for all gatherings during lockdown.
- 4. How were attendees behaving at the gathering?** What specific breaches of the law (if any) occurred? Were social distancing and mask wearing observed? Did police actions cause a reduction in social distancing? Were attendees at any point violent or aggressive towards police officers?
- 5. How did the police seek to facilitate the rights to free expression and assembly at the vigil?** What was the operational plan and how did this change? Why were arrests made and how were particular individuals selected for arrest? What force was used and why? The APPG would be grateful if you would comment specifically on accusations of "blading" and excessive force.

Please add anything else you consider relevant.

Please submit your answers in writing to Sam Fowles, Counsel to the Inquiry at [sfowles@icdr.co.uk](mailto:sfowles@icdr.co.uk). The deadline for submissions is Wednesday 14 April.