

- Possible needle mark was discussed. We were aware that Mr Taylor was righthanded and we considered the logistics behind injecting oneself into the right crease of an elbow if you were righthanded. It was concluded that this was not impossible.
- The most important development was the fact that the team investigating Mr Taylor's death had been able to obtain a CCTV image. My advice was for the team to get authority/consent for a media appeal to identify the unknown male in the picture. The image was of an unknown male who had met with Mr Taylor thirty-five hours prior to the discovery of the body, and this was the last person who possibly was in contact with Mr Taylor. We believed that this unidentified male would be able to provide some evidence as to Mr Taylor's last movements and therefore would make a witness appeal.

I then became aware on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2015 that DC Parrish had made a positive identification of the previously unidentified male. I was informed that it was Mr Port who had been charged and convicted (2015) of perverting the course of justice in relation to a male body that had been found at his home address in 2014.

It was at this stage that the deaths of Mr Walgate and Mr Taylor were linked to Mr Port. I tasked DC Parrish to obtain a Section 8 Warrant for the missing phone of Mr Taylor, from Mr Port's address. This would have provided police with a lawful power of entry to search the premises, especially if Mr Port was not at the address.

I spoke to DI Petty regarding the similarities between both of these deaths and I advised him that it was my intention to call out the Homicide Advice Team immediately, as I deemed both incidents as suspicious and being very similar in nature. This conversation was overheard by DS Turrell who had carried out tasks for the Coroner in 2014 in relation to deaths for Mr Kovari and Mr Whitworth and

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she alerted us to those deaths. She still retained a copy of photographs of the scene of where Mr Whitworth was found and we compared the picture of Mr Walgate, Mr Taylor and Mr Whitworth, immediately identifying a number of similarities. This included age, position of body, items on body, cause of death etc. I was then informed that Mr Whitworths death was indeed linked to Mr Kovari by way of location and a note found on the deceased. We were all now convinced that Mr Port had had some involvement in all four deaths and, therefore, my main first action was to relieve T/Inspector O'Donohue from the investigation into the death of Jack Taylor. I then requested that a Code D identification of Mr Port be completed by DS O'Donnell who was in another police station, to corroborate DC Parrish identification.

At this stage, I had a genuine honest held belief that MR Port was fully or partly responsible for the deaths of these four males.

From this moment on there was a flurry of activity as we assumed that the HAT car would attend immediately and would require all of the paperwork relating to the three previous deaths, as well as what we had obtained in the investigation into Mr Taylor. The HAT car however did not arrive until quarter-past-three, having been called at twelve forty. DI McKeeve and A/DI Prendergast attended – I am unsure whether DI McKeeve was T/DCI or DI at this time.

A full and comprehensive briefing took place to the HAT car which lasted between 15:15 – 17:30 hours.

My expectation upon calling HAT was to hand over the primacy to SC&O1 as the deaths appeared linked and were riddled with suspicious similar circumstances and had similar fact evidence. I believed it would be a serious and complex investigation which required multiple resources, and would fall within the remit of, SC&O1.

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At the end of the briefing DI McKeeve left the Briefing Room to brief up to an unknown Supervisor from SC&O1. Despite all of the evidence presented the conclusion was that Barking and Dagenham would retain the primacy of the investigation because we could not prove "murder". We were informed, however, that we would be supported with four search officers and one interviewer the following day, but not immediately.

I, at the time and now, believe there was a lack of urgency from SC&O1 to carry out this job. I was astonished that I and the main CID team were being left to investigate these offences as we did not have the resources or training to know how to carry out a murder investigation.

I set tasks to minimise the risk management, resourcing matters that evening (briefing and observations on the address), circulation of Mr Port as a suspect on PNC and then concentrated on ensuring all of the decisions that I had made were recorded in the Decision Log. I became the SIO despite T/DCI Kirk being present at the meeting with HAT. I also had to check on staff who were late-turn to ensure there was no other critical incidents or issues of note.

I was unsure what other day to day events were occurring on BOCU on 14th. All those involved in the HAT briefing were the best people with the most knowledge of all four cases and indeed knowledge of the suspect to work on the investigation, now that it was being left with BOCU. They had worked an extended day to plan and prepare to brief the HAT expecting that the investigations would be handed over which did not happen. There needed to be a period of rest for these officers and I expected them to return early the next door for the arrest phase to be executed once all the tasks that had been set were completed that evening.

The decision as to arresting Mr Port the next day was based on a number of factors. I had to ensure that we had a sufficient number of officers to be able to affect the arrest diligently. Mr Port's last known address was Cooke Street and I

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was unsure if this was still valid following his release from custody. I tasked DS Sweetman to ensure the observations were carried out at Mr Port's home address. I believe that DS Sweetman used his covert skills (surveillance trained) to place officers in position, fully briefed of the PNC circulation that if Mr Port was seen entering or exiting the property he needed to be arrested immediately and the scene held. I believe PC Vurulmaz was one of the officers tasked in this covert role.

Another consideration, after realising I would be the SIO for this investigation was how to manage the forensic strand of this investigation without missing any opportunities. Normally SC&O1 would liaise with a Crime Scene Manager and would receive advice as to the best way to proceed, however CSM's are not readily available to Territorial Policing, BOCU's. I have a Borough Forensic managers (BFM) who have a different level of expertise.

The basis of my forensic strategy was now evolving as depicted in my decision log:

*'I have in place a Sect 8 warrant for Taylor's m/p at Ports LKA (last known address). However my thoughts on this have changed from search of property to forensic retrieval to then search of property – rationale being placing 4 deceased (or 3 without Walgate) inside the venue.'*

This was carefully thought out. Any officer could have gone into the premises and potentially disturb/contaminate forensic evidence by an 'intrusive search'. I was mindful of the need to ensure the scene was kept as sterile as possible. My thoughts of this also were that albeit SC&O1 declined primacy I believed they would eventually take ownership. As lead officer I did not want to set in motion untrained officers searching the premises and/or a PoLSA search as this would deny any opportunity for a specialist forensics team to search such as the Evidential Recovery Unit which can only be authorised by CSM. Often Borough Officers are criticised by SC&O1 for actions / decisions they have made which

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