

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Councillor Darren Rodwell**

Leader of the Council  
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham  
Leader's Office, Room 163  
Barking Town Hall  
1 Town Square  
Barking  
Essex IG11 7LU

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Thank you for your letters of 29 June and 4 August concerning the allocation of police resources in Barking and Dagenham. I am aware you have also discussed this issue with my Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden.

I am grateful for your support in my demands of the Government for a fair police funding settlement for London. I believe we must reinforce this position at every opportunity and I want to reassure you that I will continue to fight for the resources needed to keep our city safe.

Turning to your specific concerns about Barking and Dagenham, you have laid out compelling evidence as to why East London and particularly Barking and Dagenham should receive more police resources. The allocation of police resources has long been an issue amongst your fellow Council Leaders, and we discussed this issue recently at the meeting of the Congress Executive in June, as well as Members of Parliament, the pressures on police funding will only make this issue more acute.

In your letter, you make three main points: the changing nature of crime and its recent increases; the reduction in police resources; and Barking and Dagenham's involvement in the East BCU Pathfinder alongside the London Boroughs of Havering and of Redbridge. I would like to address each of these points in turn.

As the most recent Office of National Statistics figures demonstrate, overall crime is rising across the country, and although slightly slower in London, these are deeply disturbing figures. You have highlighted violence with injury as a particular concern and tackling this is an issue that the Commissioner, Cressida Dick, has made one of her highest priorities. There have been significant increases across all boroughs in London since 2012/13, so Barking and Dagenham is not unique, with Barnet seeing a 57% increase, and a further eight Boroughs higher than Barking and Dagenham's 33% increase. I recently launched a new, tough and comprehensive knife crime strategy which, with the concerted efforts of all of us, alongside the police, can make a real difference to this scourge on our society. The rate of criminal damage in 2016/17 in Barking and Dagenham was joint highest relative to population with Westminster, but in terms of volume ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 32 Boroughs.

## MAYOR OF LONDON

I fully accept that crime is rising and the nature of crime is changing, the increase in acid attacks being a particularly distressing trend, and I am grateful for the efforts you are making locally and personally in your lobbying of government. There is no place for this type of violence in our communities and the police will take a zero tolerance approach to it wherever it occurs. I would also like to reassure you and the people of Barking and Dagenham that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is working hard to tackle this worrying trend, even though the likelihood of becoming a victim is very small. Residents should feel confident to report incidents to the police who will make sure perpetrators feel the full force of the law, with prosecutors pressing for the same enhanced sentences given to those convicted of using any other highly dangerous weapon.

Unfortunately, there have been increases too in some of the most harmful and horrific types of crime, such as domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and rape. These crimes need specialist police officers who can identify and protect the most vulnerable people and who have the skills to investigate complex offences and to support victims. As the reports of these offences increase, we must make sure we have the right resources in place to respond. It is a difficult balance that the Commissioner has to consider, the mix of resources dealing with specialist crimes providing support from the centre and those locally based officers dealing with the issues that matter to communities. In reality, these resources are flexing all the time and we forget that officers from Trident, Counter Terrorism and Territorial Support Group (TSG), to name but a few, are also working in our local communities responding to crimes and proactively trying to prevent offences from happening in the first place.

This brings me to your second point; the reduction in the number of police officers in Barking and Dagenham. We have seen a reduction in the overall number of police officers in London since 2015, with the latest figures, as at the end of June, being just over 30,700. I understand that Barking and Dagenham has been particularly hardest hit with reductions of 15%, with only Wandsworth and Bromley seeing similar reductions. The MPS has been doing its utmost to ensure as many officers as possible are in frontline visible roles and that is why I have made the commitment of two Dedicated Ward Officers and a PCSO in every Ward in London, as I know how important it is for communities to know and be known by their local officers and the percentage of the MPS's workforce that is made up of police officers has increased from 66% in Mar 2015 to 71% in June 2017. The roll out of hand held devices will mean officers spend more time on the streets in communities rather than at desks, which will increase visibility. But we cannot avoid the sad reality that years of government underfunding and real terms cuts, has taken its toll and its Londoners safety that is being put at risk - we are now at a cliff-edge.

The MPS recognised that they needed to adapt their service to the public and have embarked on one of its most significant transformation programmes, which includes the new model for local policing. I am delighted that Barking and Dagenham along with Havering and Redbridge are piloting this change – I recognise this was a difficult decision – but without your help, the MPS could not shape the future model. I know you are a supporter and have set very high expectations on the service you expect for your communities and I would expect nothing less. But I also recognise there have been particular challenges with the emergency response times and this is very worrying. Sophie is keeping a very close eye on this and regularly holding the MPS to account for performance and has demanded improvements. I will shortly be meeting with the Commissioner to discuss the Pathfinders and I will focus particularly on the impact it is having in Barking and Dagenham and ask the Commissioner to give serious consideration to the resources made available locally.

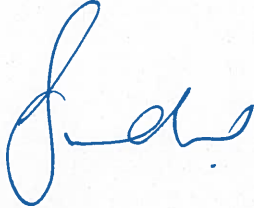
I will also ask Sophie to meet with you in the coming weeks to discuss progress with the BCU and also to hear your concerns about the proposed closure of Dagenham Police Station.

# MAYOR OF LONDON

Let me reassure you that the proposed closure of police stations is not a decision I have taken lightly, but the alternative is further reductions in police officer numbers and as you have so eloquently described, this is not an option that we can consider in London.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,



**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London

Cc: Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime  
Jon Cruddas MP, Member of Parliament for Dagenham and Rainham  
Rt Hon Dame Margaret Hodge MP, Member of Parliament for Barking  
Unmesh Desai AM, Member of the London Assembly for City and East  
Detective Chief Superintendent Jason Gwillim, BCU Commander, East Area