



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt. Hon. Sir Sadiq Khan,
Mayor of London,
City Hall, Kamal Chunchie Way,
London,
E16 1ZE.

Monday, 10th February 2025.

Dear Sadiq,

I am writing in response to the consultation on your Police and Crime Plan (2025 - 2029).

Bexley is more trusting of the Metropolitan Police than other parts of London. As you will know from the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime's surveys, three-quarters of people from our community trust the police. But behind this high level of trust, some people have sadly lost faith in policing under your mayoralty. The number of people living in Bexley who feel the police do a good job locally, feel informed about police action locally, and feel the police can be relied upon has fallen by around a fifth since 2016. The share of people who know their local ward police officer has halved — a sign of how far neighbourhood policing has fallen on your watch.

While trust in the police is high among most of my constituents, too often, they feel ignored with their fears deprioritised and see little action on reported crimes. Your decision to scrap Bexley's dedicated Borough Operational Command Unit in 2018 is one reason behind this. The inevitable consequence of dismantling Bexley's policing structures to combine it with Greenwich and Lewisham — where crime is higher — in a single Borough Command Unit (BCU) is fewer police resources here. The recent creation of superintendents in every borough is welcome, but this hasn't undone the damage to neighbourhood policing your restructure caused seven years ago.



Bexley may be the fourth safest borough in London for overall crime, but it still faces significant policing challenges locally.

First, Bexley now has the fifth-highest vehicle theft rate in London. The number of offences has risen by 25.9% over the last twelve months compared to the previous period. Over 1,115 vehicles have been reported stolen in the last year, but there have only been 25 positive outcomes for residents. This crime inflicts a substantial financial loss on victims, who must pay for a new vehicle and potentially lose work until they do. They also feel vulnerable and anxious as car thieves go unpunished, with the community feeling the same anxiety and facing rising insurance premiums.

Local Safer Neighbourhood Teams in my constituency have prioritised this and are pioneering efforts to stamp out vehicle theft. However, these criminal gangs still go largely uncaught, and the police resources at a BCU level do not match the challenge.

Second, shoplifting has increased by 63% over the last twelve months compared to the previous period. Bexley isn't unique in seeing this rise, but our borough has a considerable retail sector that employs many people locally. Sidcup and Welling in my constituency — the second and third largest town centres — have seen the largest increases of 68% and 179%, respectively. While Bexleyheath, the largest town centre in the borough, has a higher rate of shoplifting and also has far more positive outcomes than Sidcup and Welling, only 61 positive outcomes of 719 offences collectively compared to 194 of 835 in Bexleyheath.

With so few shoplifters caught in my constituency, underreporting is rife among local businesses. If trust in the police among businesses is to grow, efforts to stamp out shoplifting must also extend into other leading shopping areas. But to do so, neighbourhood policing teams must be strengthened.

Finally, burglary remains a huge concern for my constituents. While the number of burglaries has fallen by almost a third over the past twelve months, they are rising in Welling, with 73 incidents in the last year and not a single positive outcome.



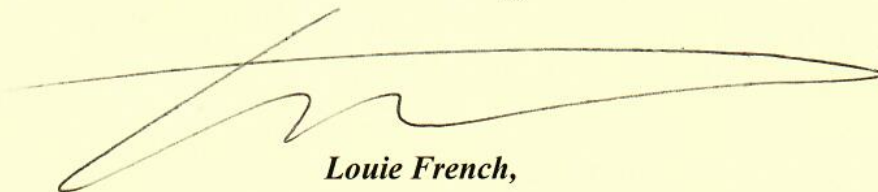
Over the previous two years, criminals carried out 688 residential burglaries in my Old Bexley and Sidcup constituency, with only 16 positive outcomes. Burglaries leave households feeling shaken, but when unsolved, they leave a whole street feeling unsafe — I have lost count of the number of times constituents have told me of their frustration with the lack of action.

If you want your latest Police and Crime Plan to be a success, then the Metropolitan Police's primary focus must be on catching criminals for the courts to prosecute. Your mayoralty has seen some crimes effectively decriminalised, with thieves, burglars, and other criminals left un-investigated. While your predecessor recruited more neighbourhood police officers, local policing in outer London has been decimated on your watch. The Metropolitan Police was the only force in the country to fail to spend the previous Government's additional recruitment funding to boost officer numbers. Your decision to dismantle the borough policing structure has also detached the police force from the communities they serve.

I welcome proposals in the plan to work with vehicle manufacturers to improve security, strengthen powers around antisocial behaviour, and impose tougher sentences on shoplifting. But these fall outside your powers as London mayor.

Many across my constituency, myself included, remain unconvinced that your plan will deliver on the one thing you are responsible for above all else: giving the police the resources to investigate crimes, catch criminals, and to be visible in neighbourhoods.

Yours sincerely,



Louie French,

Member of Parliament for Old Bexley, Sidcup and Welling.