

Emma Best AM

AssemblyChair@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MOPAC141125-M5490

16 June 2026

Dear Emma,

I am writing on behalf of the Mayor in response to your petition objecting to the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) proposed changes to the opening hours of the Romford police station front counter. I am grateful for your sharing of this petition at the London Assembly Policing Plenary Meeting on 13 November 2025 and recognise the strength of feeling on this issue. I apologise for the delay in replying.

Restoring visible neighbourhood policing remains at the heart of the Mayor's agenda to build a safer London for all. He has invested more in the MPS than any previous Mayor by a huge margin – bringing City Hall's investment from 19 per cent of the MPS's total budget in the last year of the previous Mayor to 25 per cent now.

However, the MPS is still in a difficult financial situation due to the legacy of the previous government's austerity policies, which saw funding cuts to policing equivalent to a £1.2 billion reduction in real terms. In this context of finite resources, the Commissioner and the Mayor are prioritising the things that matter most to Londoners: putting more officers into communities to tackle neighbourhood crime; a renewed focus on driving down violence, making sure the most vulnerable people are protected; and continuing to deliver improvements to the MPS's response times.

We are seeing positive results from the prioritisation we have taken: homicides were at the lowest level in over 20 years last summer – with knife crime, robbery, burglary, and theft all falling last year. Neighbourhood policing teams have seen an increase in the operational capability by 500 officers and staff ranging from Superintendent to PCSOs, who are working closer than ever with London's local communities, with the Commissioner aiming to get to over 4,300 officers working in neighbourhoods by the end of March 2026.

The MPS's Romford Town Centre Team, which consists of fifteen officers, responds to calls, and conducts numerous visible and plain clothes operations within the town centre. They work in partnership with Havering Council, local businesses, security and Havering Business Improvement District to improve the area and strengthen professional relationships.

This past year, the Team has demonstrated its professionalism and commitment to commuters, visitors, businesses and residents of Romford Town Centre. Across Havering in the past year to March 2026, we have seen theft decrease by ten per cent (including a near ten per cent decrease in shoplifting), burglary decrease by 19 per cent, and vehicle offences decrease by over 11 per cent.

Regarding front counters specifically, we know that London's use of front counters is declining year on year, with the MPS recording an average 3.5 crimes a day reported at Romford's front counter. At the same time, we are seeing an increase in different ways to report crime, including online.

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The MPS brought forward its initial proposal last year and carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) last summer to ensure the proposal was responsive to the needs of London's diverse communities and the MPS's staff. The Mayor was clear that the EIA should explore the impact across all protected characteristics and that the draft proposals needed more detail on the specific barriers faced by vulnerable groups, such as language, access, technology use, and transport.

The Mayor's feedback, and that of other community groups, was taken on board by the MPS, which came back with a revised proposal in the autumn to improve the spread of access to front counters across London. This proposal meant fewer front counters closed and more counters moved to a reduced-hours model. In the case of Romford, this means the front counter will be open to the public from 10:00 to 22:00 on weekdays and from 09:00 to 19:00 on weekends. This decision does not mean that other operations at the police station will be affected. Further front counter changes across the MPS estate will be implemented by the MPS alongside the additional mitigation option of introducing digital touchscreens outside front counters.

Thank you for presenting your petition, I hope my response provides assurance on how the Commissioner and the Mayor are focusing on the public's policing and community safety priorities with the resources at our disposal.

The Mayor will continue to work closely with the Government and the Commissioner, with ongoing constructive talks with ministers about the funding the MPS needs in future years to ensure we can continue building a safer London for everyone.

Yours sincerely,



Kaya Comer-Schwartz
Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime