



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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c/o Siobhan Coldwell
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Police and Crime Plan Consultation Submission

I am writing as the Member of Parliament for Croydon North to express my deep concerns about the proposed closure of every police station within the Croydon North constituency as well as the closure of Gipsy Hill police station which sits on the edge of my constituency and serves the Crystal Palace area.

The mayor will know only too well the devastation caused in Croydon by the riots in the summer of 2011 and the homes and businesses which were destroyed when the police were unable, at first, to withstand the level of public disorder. The London road, which was the focus for much of the rioting, cuts through the centre of my constituency where he now proposes to close every single police station.

Across my constituency people tell me how angry and frustrated they are that less than two years after the riots, police numbers are now lower than they were on the day that the riots started and the proposed closures of police stations will reduce police visibility, increase the fear of crime and lengthen response times to 999 calls.

The most recent Metropolitan police statistics on crime levels across Croydon (year to January 2013) show a small overall drop in crime in the borough. However, robbery from a person is up by 14.6%, domestic crime is up 12.6% whilst racist and religious hate crime is up by 81%. Closing every police station in the constituency will do nothing to tackle crimes like these.

According to the most recent ONS statistics, the eight wards which form the Croydon North constituency have a combined population of 136,044. This is greater than cities like Exeter, Carlisle or Norwich and is comparable in size to a city like Middlesbrough yet the mayor is proposing to close every single police station across the constituency. I am yet to see either any convincing rationale for this course of action or why Croydon North has been singled out in this way by the mayor so soon after the riots.

The closures of South Norwood and Norbury stations are visible reminders to local people of the betrayal that many of them feel after the promises made to them immediately after the riots. The proposals for Croydon also fail to address the recommendations made in the Croydon Independent Local Review Panel after the riots which recommended that the Metropolitan Police should seek to have a *"more visible policing presence"* in *"the North West Croydon area including London Road"*.

Instead of learning the lessons from the Croydon riots and listening to the conclusions presented by the local panel about how to deal with the ongoing issues of crime, the mayor has not only failed to increase the police presence in this area but is also proposing to remove the existing police presence at Norbury and South Norwood.

In addition to the proposed closure of every police station in Croydon North, the mayor is proposing to close Gipsy Hill police station which sits on the edge of my constituency and in the Crystal Palace district centre. The Crystal Palace area has been well served by a local cross-border safer neighbourhood team who focus on the Crystal Palace triangle, the majority of which sits within Croydon.

The need for effective cross-borough policing here is unmistakable and needs to be addressed. The closure of Gipsy Hill police station affects not only my constituency but the whole local area and should instead be maintained and used as a base for local policing across all the neighbouring boroughs.

Since the 2010 election the number of PCSOs and police officers in Croydon has fallen dramatically. In a freedom of information request made by the member of parliament for Harrow East, Gareth Thomas, the Metropolitan Police revealed that between 31st March 2010 and 31st March 2012 (the dates on which force data is collected) Croydon lost 51% of its PCSOs and 12% of its police officers. There were 730 police officers in Croydon in March 2011, shortly before the riots began – but a year later that number had fallen, despite all the promises made by the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Mayor of London, to just 661.

The percentage fall in police officers in Croydon between 2010 and 2012 is four times that in other outer London boroughs like Havering or Hillingdon and more than 50% higher than in Sutton or Redbridge. There is no clear justification for why the mayor has cut police numbers in Croydon by so much more than other outer London boroughs.

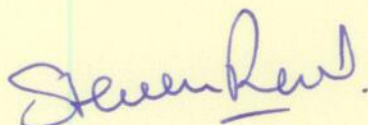
The mayor, and neighbouring Conservative MPs have quibbled with these figures, and I know that the mayor used other figures. However, in response to a parliamentary answer that I received from the Minister for the Police he informed me that police numbers are only collected on 31st March of each year and, therefore, the figures provided in response to the aforementioned Freedom of Information request, detailing force numbers on those dates, are clearly the most reliable, transparent and effective means of measuring the decline in police numbers under the present government and mayoral administration.

The police are overstretched and neighbourhood policing, under the mayor's proposals, is likely to become a slogan rather than a strategy.

Rather than quibbling over the figures I would much rather the mayor engage effectively with local people to explain to the residents of Croydon why their police numbers have been reduced by more than neighbouring outer London boroughs and why it is in Croydon North that the mayor proposes to close every police station, leaving a population of 136,000 residents without a local police station and lengthening 999 response times to serious crime across the North of Croydon.

The London Assembly offered the mayor an alternative plan to his proposed closures; he ought to look again rather than pressing ahead with this deeply misguided and damaging proposal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steve Reed' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steve Reed MP