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west midlands
police and crime
commissioner

Our reference: 2024-00727

Matt MacDonald

Sent by email only:

hello@betterstreetsforbirmingham.org

30 July 2024

Dear Matt,

Introduction

Thank you for your letter dated 26 July 2024. I am grateful to you for writing to me about the matters raised in your letter. I am also grateful to Better Streets for Birmingham, for all the campaigning and hard work that you and your team, have engaged in, to ensure that road safety and related matters, continue to receive the attention that is required. I welcome your offer and the opportunity to continue to work collaboratively, with Better Streets for Birmingham.

My Commitment

As Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands and as Chair of the West Midlands Road Safety Strategic Group, preventing and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour on our roads, promoting road harm reduction and reducing the number of people tragically and avoidably killed and seriously injured on our roads are top priorities. As I know you appreciate, this is a matter that concerns the entire West Midlands region and requires local, regional and national action and a multi-agency approach.

Legacy of 14 years

It is important that we understand context and history. If we do not, we risk exacerbating and repeating the mistakes of the past. Unfortunately, reckless financial cuts imposed by central government on West Midlands Police, over the past 14 years and the consequential loss of 25% of police officers and 50% of PCSOs, made it significantly more difficult to prevent and tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on our roads. That was a big mistake and it has undoubtedly contributed, to a rise in crime and anti-social behaviour on our roads.

Notwithstanding, the so-called national police uplift, West Midlands Police still has 800 fewer police officers and 500 fewer PCSOs than it had in 2010. We have a national police funding regime, that disproportionately disadvantages West Midlands Police in the sum of £40 million a year, the equivalent of 800 police officers. In addition to all that, police officer numbers have not kept pace with population growth. That would require another 620 police officers. So, an additional 2,220 police officers would be required, to bring West Midlands Police, to where it needs to be.

There has been no levelling up, when it comes to policing in the West Midlands.

Prevention, Enforcement and Partnerships

We need a range of collaborative, determined and sustained action by multi-agency partners locally, regionally and nationally. That includes West Midlands Police, the West Midlands Combined

Authority, the Metro Mayor, local authorities, Transport for West Midlands, National Highways, the automotive industry, Ambulance and Fire Services, campaign groups, central government, our elected MPs and Councillors and myself as Police and Crime Commissioner, if we are to reduce the number of people tragically and avoidably killed and seriously injured on our roads.

That includes robust enforcement by policing, but it also includes: improved public transport, more active travel, lower traffic neighbourhoods, an improved regulatory environment, engineering related initiatives, awareness and education, a change in culture, so that road safety is always seen as the first and paramount consideration and is not framed as a 'war on motorists' and each and every one of us, accepting personal responsibility and being mindful of the duty of care, that we all owe to other road users.

Summary of Action

I set out below, a summary of the action I have taken and/or will continue to take, as Police and Crime Commissioner. That includes the following:

- Holding West Midlands Police to account to prevent, tackle and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour on our roads, including via Operation Triton;
- Rebuilding community policing, because we need preventative, proactive and visible policing, including enforcement and community Speed Watch schemes;
- Preparing a Police and Crime Plan 2024-2030, that ensures delivering road safety is a top priority;
- Investing in and expanding, the West Midlands Police Road Harm Prevention Team and Road Crime and Traffic Teams;
- Working with WMP and local authorities, to finalise a Joint Working Agreement, to support the roll out of average speed enforcement cameras and increasing the capacity for enforcement;
- Funding and supporting, action to prevent and tackle anti-social and dangerous street racing, including raising awareness and education;
- Launching the refreshed West Midlands Road Safety Strategy in 2023 and delivering the West Midlands Road Safety Action Plan, to be launched in 2024;
- Supporting police operations, to prevent and take enforcement action against dangerous, speeding, drink and drug driving, use of digital devices, failure to wear seat belts, uninsured drivers and implement MARSO, Close Pass and Zig Zag operations;
- Campaigning for government, and calling on all our elected representatives in the West Midlands, to support my campaign, to allow the West Midlands to retain revenue from fixed penalty fines, to invest in road safety;
- Securing safer streets funding, for investment in 3 additional Mobile Camera Enforcement Vans and 16 additional speed guns, for community speed watch schemes;
- Securing safer streets funding, to increase the capacity for third party dash cam reporting, by allocating 5 additional police staff, increasing reporting and improving enforcement and positive outcomes;
- Working with local authorities, to take on responsibility for moving road traffic contraventions and to ensure a region wide approach;
- Campaigning to replace our 800 missing police officers and 500 missing PCSOs and to implement fair funding for West Midlands Police, that adversely impacts the ability of West Midlands Police to prevent and tackle crime and ASB and to keep our roads safe;
- Investing in victim support services in the West Midlands, including for victims of road traffic collisions and supporting the UK's first dedicated Family Liaison Unit and a Road Collision Project, to ensure that the rights and welfare of victims are safeguarded;
- Committing to Vision Zero, to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads by at least 50% by 2030 and for all deaths and serious injuries, to be eliminated from the West Midlands by 2041; and
- Meeting with representatives of and attending Better Streets for Birmingham campaign events and working with Road Peace, to highlight the need to prioritise the rights and welfare of victims.
- A summary of recent action taken by West Midlands Police, is attached here: [Each road death is a tragedy, and we're determined to make our streets safer | West Midlands Police](#)

Your Letter: Further action

I intend to consult with the Chief Constable, West Midlands Police and other relevant partners, before responding to each of the 10 matters raised in your letter. Some of these relate to partners other than policing and in connection with some, action is already in the process of being taken.

When I do respond, I will be mindful of and have regard to, my constituency being the entirety of the West Midlands region and that preventing and tackling crime and ASB and reducing the number of people tragically and avoidably killed and seriously injured on our roads, requires a range of collaborative, determined and sustained action by multi-agency partners locally, regionally and nationally.

I commit to: firstly, responding to you in writing and/or meeting with you and other relevant partners, with a view to discussing and engaging with you, regarding the 10 matters raised in your letter; secondly, if possible, identifying and agreeing with you a course of action; thirdly, in default of agreement, explaining to you the reasons for any decisions; and finally, if possible, identifying suitable alternative or additional courses of action.

I will write to you again as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Simon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Foster', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Simon Foster

Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands