

Mr Boris Johnson, Mayor of London
The Greater London Authority
City Hall,
The Queen's Walk,
London, SE1 2AA

BY EMAIL: 13 March 2013

Dear Mayor Johnson

Policing and Crime Plan

The Crystal Palace Community Association (CPCA), a 43-year-old registered charity and amenity society, and the Gipsy Hill Residents Association (GHRA), is deeply concerned over proposals to close the purpose built Gipsy Hill police station as part of the cuts to be imposed on London's police forces.

Upper Norwood is a unique part of southeast London lying, as it does, at the confluence of five London boroughs; Lambeth, Croydon, Southwark, Bromley and Lewisham. There is nowhere else in London with this anomalous configuration.

Over many decades the cross-borough make-up of the neighbourhood has led to significant difficulties in many areas of local government administration including effective, intelligence-led, local policing.

Different initiatives have been made over the years to improve the efficacy of policing in Norwood; the latest being the creation of a Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood Triangle SNT. This cross-borough team has enjoyed some success; demonstrating the benefits and efficiencies of cross-border policing. However, it is understood that even this small presence is likely to be reduced under ill-conceived and researched cost-cutting proposals with the 'Local Policing Model' being part reliant on 'contact points' in, as yet, unidentified locations. Additionally, police will be based at centres well away from the Crystal Palace/Norwood area ensuring that valuable time is spent 'commuting' between their 'home' base and the 'patch' they have been assigned to work in.

Regular 'abstractions' already compromise this small team; seriously affecting their ability to deliver a dependable Neighbourhood Policing service in a cross-borough area that is suffering significant increases in levels of crime and disorder, as verified in the latest 'crime-data' records.

Under current Mopac proposals there will be NO local police station in the wider Norwood area, where currently Upper Norwood's Gipsy Hill police station is centrally located. Streatham High Street and Maple Road, Penge, operating under limited daytime only hours, will be the 'nearest' police stations for the residents and businesses of Upper Norwood, South Norwood, West Norwood and large areas of Norbury and Thornton Heath. 'Proper' front desk 24-hour services will only be available in Central Croydon, Central Bromley, Peckham and Brixton all, with the exception of Maple Road, being many miles away from Upper Norwood.

Borough or ward-based policing boundaries are not appropriate in the Crystal Palace/Upper Norwood area. Currently Borough Commanders are limited in their vision, particularly in respect of this multi-borough area, concentrating, in the main, on their own 'core' areas, targets and bonus related remuneration.

As previously stated, this 'unique' part of London requires a unique approach to policing operations. CPCA and GHRA consider that the time is now right to look at the creation of a new Met police force, one that is adequately resourced and truly able to operate on a wider cross-borough/border basis.

CPCA and GHRA believe that such an approach would be highly cost effective. A purpose built Gipsy Hill station already exists. Existing forces that presently meet at Upper Norwood could be scaled back, with officers being transferred to the new Met force. This arrangement would create significant improvements in intelligence and information gathering leading to more effective solving of crime and social disorder.

A new cross-borough boundary would be established and a different and creative hierarchal structure of management and control will need to be devised. This should not be beyond the scope of those tasked with the management and governance of our highly regarded Met Police Force.

A great many people from all social groups will be greatly inconvenienced by the closure Of Gipsy Hill and, just a worryingly, police response and effectiveness will be significantly compromised.

The CPCA and GHRA urge that you urgently consider the retention and deployment of Gipsy Hill Police Station, paying regard to the comments and observations above, and how the future of policing will be delivered on an effective cross-borough basis in future years.

Editor's note: The CPCA's membership base is made up of residents and some businesses from all of these boroughs, while the GHRA operates primarily for the benefit of its members in the Gipsy Hill Ward and surrounding area.

John Payne, Chair CPCA

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cc's; Please refer to cc line in accompanying email