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|  | Romford Police Station  19 Main Road,  Romford  RM1 3BJ  Tel: 01708 779277  Email: (simon.hutchison@met.police.uk)  Friday 16th February 2024. |

Parents in Havering,

I have received a number of very concerning letters and emails either directly or through your MP / Councillor regarding robbery on the borough. I have read each one and where attached, the social media comments that highlight similar concerns or experiences. I wholeheartedly agree that our children should be able to come into our town centres and travel on our transport network without fear of being robbed. I have seen on many occasions children becoming victims of these offences, but not wishing to report the matter to police. Reading between the lines I believe that in the main this is for fear of retribution but sense an undertone that the police will do nothing so there is no point.

I will be open and candid with you and outline that Met data suggest a 45% increase (FYTD) in robbery offences from last year. Whilst this is neither an excuse or meant to provide mitigation, these figures are still below pre-covid levels where we have a truer picture of crime levels. That said, my fear is that under reporting is clouding the true number of robberies and from your letters and emails I sense the figure is considerably higher and we are more likely closer to pre-covid levels. In terms of the number of recorded offences we have had 453 robberies FTYD (as of 04/02/2024) across Havering. This equates to about 1.4 offences a day. Each of these offences has in the main a young person as a victim who has been scared and felt afraid. The question that has been asked is where are the police and what are the police doing about it?

You have very committed and dedicated officers policing not only the town centre but all of your wards. As a snap shot, last year Havering’s Town Centre team arrested 555 people and recovered through stop and search numerous weapons. I say this not to invoke fear, but to highlight the proactive nature of what they are doing. I have two dedicated town centre teams that work a mixture of shifts, predominantly lates (1400 – 2200) and nights (2000 – 0600) to ensure coverage at key times. They are 90% of the time in uniform and are dedicated to the town centre. When in plain clothes this is in response to intelligence that requires a more discreet policing tactic. A recent example of this was when they disrupted a county line and recovered 50 wraps of Heroin and £80,000 in cash. The team conducted over 1400 stop and searches last year with a positive outcome 27% of the time, this means that the person stopped was more often than not arrested. Whilst the majority of reported robbery offences are in the town centre it is acknowledged that offences do take place outside of this location. Recently a spate of robberies occurred in Rainham which ignited public outrage. I ensured that the response to this was multi-faceted, schools officers were in direct contact with the local school, an increased uniform presence was implemented and covert asset deployed to locate potential suspects. With the resources available to me I work alongside intelligence officers and communities to try and pre-empt offending and task teams according to the demands.

What I have outlined above explains our response but does not address what we are doing with regards to prevention. Below is a list of tactics used to reduce opportunities for offending, this is not an exhaustive list but provides you with an idea of what we are doing to manage this problem.

* Use intelligence led stop and search to identify offenders and reduce offending opportunities
* Work in conjunction with Havering council enforcement officers to increase visibility
* Embed a police officer in the Local Authority CCTV control room to identify suspects and direct officers on the ground
* Joint operations with British Transport Police at Train Stations with drug detection dogs, behavioural detection officers and revenue staff
* Initial planning work with the Mets Facial recognition teams to trail facial recognition operations in the Town Centre (subject to approval)
* Utilise Youth Unity through the Local Authority to divert young people away from crime
* Work closely with Havering Schools, attending quarterly head teacher meetings and ensuring schools have access to a dedicated schools officer
* Use withdrawal of implied permission on train network to reduce travel opportunities
* Work with knife crime charities to reduce impact of crime and reach schools across the borough.
* Directly linked into the boroughs Pupil Referral Units to divert young people away from crime through various means

Coming back to my initial point around lack of reporting. The first point was with regards to fear of retribution. I encourage you all to report any crimes that occur to you or your children. Where necessary we can apply for anonymity if there is a fear retribution, using legislation under the Youth and Criminal Justice Evidence Act 1999. We have skilled detectives that work within our robbery teams that can manage victim concerns and apply for victims details to be removed from court proceedings. I also acknowledge that this may still not be sufficient to persuade someone to give evidence, but I would still encourage reporting so we can build up patterns of locations, suspect descriptions, names and how they carry out offences, all vital information if we are to succeed in combating robbery. The second point is ‘what’s the point, the police don’t do anything’. As I have highlighted above we are committed to finding these people, arresting them and putting them before the court. We are sometimes stretched due to demand, this does not mean that we do not care and we endeavour to get to you as soon as we possibly can. Sometimes it is difficult to locate offenders, this does not mean that we have not done all that we can to locate them. Only this week my team were doing a backward and forward trawl of hours’ worth of CCTV to locate and identify suspects. We have already arrested a number of suspects this year for robbery offences and utilised conditions to prevent them from entering Romford. We need the cooperation of all victims of robbery to ensure a successful prosecution. Without cooperation, cases are often unable to proceed leaving the suspect free from any criminal investigation with bail conditions removed and once again able to enter our towns.

Finally, I have been working with Councillor Sue Ospreay to deliver a local event in Rainham to answer community concerns. I am keen to answer your questions and provide you with reassurance around the work that we are doing, details of how to contact us (which can be found [here](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.met.police.uk%2Farea%2Fyour-area%2F&data=05%7C02%7CSimon.Hutchison%40met.police.uk%7C8e64c2a8063d4e3edd4a08dc2ef190ea%7Cf3ee2a7e72354d28ab42617c4c17f0c1%7C0%7C0%7C638436862248918970%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=sIWj3MmNthq8hmjuKfUatat8Hb%2FMWdg9JNlsvm0tmw4%3D&reserved=0)) and seek your views on things you feel we should or could be doing. If this is something that you would welcome please let your local policing team or councillor know and we will set up other events. You can also contact your local policing team via the link provided and they will advise where they are and on what dates, for face to face interaction.

I hope that this allays some of your fears, answers some of your questions and helps you to understand the current position regarding Robbery offences in Havering.

Yours Faithfully

Simon Hutchison



Superintendent