



AN OPEN LETTER TO:
The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP

Friday, 16 December 2016
REF: ZA43311

Dear Priti,

CRIME RATES IN WITHAM

In October 2016, I wrote to you outlining the Chamber's serious concerns regarding the levels of crime in our town, and the lack of funding given to Essex Police to protect our district. Firstly, many thanks for your response regarding this important matter.

In your response, you stated that crime rates in for Witham had shown a downward trend since 2010 and that peaks and troughs were to be expected as time goes by. You also stated there are more crimes being reported which contributes to the crime numbers increasing recently. All valid points, I agree.

I would however like to argue the above by raising the following:

Since the closure of the Witham Police Station the crime has increased. Stating that the increase in crime is due to more being reported does not justify the increase itself; if it was not happening in the first place it would not be reported. Contradictory to this fact, many residents have voiced their frustrations at the 101 service not being available or being placed in excessive hold queues where reporting a crime doesn't happen, this would suggest that perhaps the crime rate should be higher?

I fully agree that buildings alone do not catch criminals nor deter criminal activity; having regular patrols going through our town giving a clearly visible presence does and makes a huge difference. Post closure of the station, unless Essex Police are responding to an incident in our town, we see very little police presence. On speaking with Essex Police, we accept this is not because of a lack of wanting a presence, but because funding and resources are simply too stretched (I refer you to my letter in October concerning police numbers and areas covered).

We, as a growing town, believe this gives the criminals the impression that Witham is an easy target; highlighted by the fact that the town has again been subjected to multiple serious crimes with another three armed incidents in a matter of days plus numerous petty crimes included.

The public and businesses in our town have simply had enough! Some are scared, most are frustrated and some even angry. I feel strongly that we as a town are being let down, pushed aside, and de-prioritised by the government; a lack of funding for our emergency services seems a contradiction to its purpose does it not? As a town, we need to feel protected and to send out a message that Witham is a safe place to live, and to reduce opportunists seeing our town as an easy target.

As Chamber Chair, I hereby formally ask you, as our MP representative, and someone who I believe cares deeply for this town, fights for additional funding to give Essex Police the ability to better serve and protect the people of Witham.

Yours truly,

Tina Townsend, Chamber Chair