

Cllr Simon Dudley
Maidenhead Riverside Ward
Leader, Royal Borough of
Windsor & Maidenhead
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2 January 2018

Anthony Stansfeld
Police and Crime Commissioner
Thames Valley Police
Thames Valley Police Headquarters
Oxford Road
Kidlington
OX5 2NX

Dear Anthony

I write to set out my concerns regarding the policing response to anti-social behaviour, including aggressive begging and intimidation in Windsor. Before doing so, I would like to place on record our thanks to all the team at Thames Valley Police (TVP) for the work they do to protect our community.

As you will be aware from your officers, there is a growing concern amongst residents, businesses and visitors regarding the number of people occupying the streets of Windsor, who are begging during the day and in some cases taking occupancy throughout the night. Since 2016 the Royal Borough has invested heavily in the support services for vulnerable residents, including those who are homeless. This includes:

- The establishment of an emergency night shelter open 365 days a year.
- A day service, attached to the night shelter, providing support services to our vulnerable residents. The service assists people to address their complex needs, enabling them to move into temporary and then permanent accommodation - removing them from the cycle of homelessness.
- Operating a drug and alcohol support service and an integrated mental health service, jointly run by the council and the Clinical Commissioning Group; the service targets support to vulnerable adults, including those living on the streets.
- A comprehensive seven day a week service for the homeless or those at risk of homelessness operating in Ascot, Maidenhead and Windsor.
- Implementation of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).

The Royal Borough has gone further than implementing SWEP in line with regulation – as you will know, this applies when the temperature drops below zero for three days. We are providing emergency accommodation to all those individuals who are homeless during the

significant cold spell this winter. In addition to providing emergency accommodation, we provide support services to either relocate the vulnerable adult back to their home town or,

if they are a resident of the Royal Borough, we identify support services required to enable them to move from rough sleeping permanently.

In the Royal Borough we believe homelessness is completely unacceptable in a caring, compassionate community such as ours. We are working to create the necessary housing for our residents. We are in the process of finalising our emerging Borough Local Plan (BLP) that will provide the necessary housing for our whole community, including social housing. The BLP will be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government in late January 2018.

Our work on the SWEP has provided us with the evidence that a large number of adults that are begging in Windsor are not in fact homeless, and if they are homeless they are choosing to reject all support services to beg on the streets of Windsor. In the case of homelessness amongst this group, it is therefore a voluntary choice. Recently, council officers secured emergency accommodation for every individual begging and rough sleeping in Windsor, through making contact with each one. A significant number of the adults chose not to turn up and use the accommodation that we had purchased for them, instead choosing to remain on the street begging. This is creating a concerning and hostile atmosphere for our residents and the seven million tourists who come to Windsor each year.

It is becoming increasingly concerning to see the quantities of bags and detritus that those begging are accumulating and leaving on our pavements, at times unattended, thus presenting a security risk. Residents, businesses and visitors are consistently raising concerns regarding this situation. Our residents, businesses and visitors rightly assume that TVP will take immediate action, as this is a significant security concern, especially given the national importance of Windsor.

Obviously, the level of tourist interest is set to multiply with the Royal Wedding in May 2018, and there are increased concerns from our residents about their safety. The whole situation also presents a beautiful town in a sadly unfavourable light. As Leader of the Royal Borough this situation is totally unacceptable to me and my fellow councillors.

Given increasing disquiet, we have recently met with the local Area Commander to explore options of how we can collectively address the issue of safety for our local residents, businesses and the millions of visitors who come to Windsor. I continue to be disappointed that the Commander's view is that the local authority should deal with the issue solely through a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). I have reviewed the Home Office advice on the applicability of PSPOs issued on the 24th December 2017, and it is clear to me that this is not the appropriate option given the circumstances. Even if we did secure a PSPO for Windsor, this would take considerable time, extending well beyond the Royal Wedding – and there would be no police resources to enforce the PSPO. Moreover, the Police already have the powers required to deal with this under existing primary legislation. There are a range of measures available to TVP to take action and support the Royal Borough in protecting residents and tourists, including enforcing current laws on vagrancy (The Vagrancy Act 1824) or the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, including implementing Criminal Behaviour Orders for the numerous offenders.

These concerns arise within the wider context of funding for community safety within Windsor. As you will be aware, during 2017 on behalf of all partners concerned with security in Windsor, we funded temporary hostile vehicle mitigation measures in Windsor. This followed the tragic events in Westminster. In addition, we now find ourselves in a position of having to fully fund the permanent measures at a cost of in the region of £2.5m, even though TVP originally made a verbal commitment to fund 50 per cent of the cost. We want to protect our residents, tourists and members of our fantastic armed forces who undertake the changing of the guard and other ceremonial events in Windsor. Windsor is a garrison town and rightly very proud of its military connections.

We are further concerned that it is becoming clear that TVP is unlikely to contribute anything towards the extensive CCTV renewal programme in the Royal Borough, which is costing us in excess of £1.25m. This is despite the fact that TVP are frequent users of the resource and previously indicated an intention to assist with funding. This would have been entirely appropriate given the importance of CCTV in detecting and prosecuting crimes, such as recent charges for two alleged rapes, one in Windsor and another in Maidenhead. Again, we are investing heavily in this new technology in part due to the unique characteristics and risks that Windsor faces. The Royal Borough has had to underwrite the full cost here, because in my view it is simply unacceptable to delay measures which protect our residents and visitors in order to secure appropriate and proportionate contributions from TVP.

I believe that there is a clear case of Windsor needing to be considered separately and more visibly by TVP because of the special context and security profile of the town. I request that you give immediate attention to the issues facing Windsor, and ensure all necessary financial and human resources necessary to protect our local residents, businesses and visitors.

I look forward to hearing from you urgently on what action you are taking to address the growing concerns, and would of course be happy to meet with you at your earliest opportunity to discuss these issues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Dudley', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Cllr Simon Dudley
Leader of the Royal Borough of
Windsor and Maidenhead

cc: Alison Alexander, MD Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Prime Minister
The Rt Hon Adam Afriyie MP
The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP, Home Secretary
The Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

