

Leader and Cabinet Office

Cllr Peray Ahmet
Leader of the Council



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05 August 2021

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Tottenham's future

Ten years ago this week my community of Tottenham experienced a week of unrest and disorder.

The striking thing for me at the time was the way the young people were spoken about, and I remember the startling images of young people who were looting in Tottenham Hale. Nobody could condone what was happening and people were scared, but we all had to pause and think what was driving our young people to act in this way?

In the aftermath of the riots it was acknowledged - including by the independent panel that you established - that the people of Tottenham faced many structural disadvantages. These included racism, higher than average rates of unemployment, lower educational attainment, poorer health outcomes and significant overcrowding. It was also acknowledged that the relationship between the community and the police was not what it should be.

As Mayor you were vocal in making the case for additional investment for the area. Since 2011 substantial work has been done by the council, its partners and the community to build on Tottenham's strengths and begin to address these and other related social and economic issues. This meant that before the Covid pandemic hit in 2020, compared to 2011, there were:

- Fewer adults of working age claiming the main out of work benefit (formerly Job Seekers Allowance now Universal Credit)

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- Fewer children either permanently or temporarily excluded from school
- All schools in Tottenham rated either good or outstanding by Ofsted
- Fewer families living in temporary accommodation

This is not to pretend that it was job done. Of course not. Even before the pandemic there was still a long way to go to ensure that growing up in Tottenham provided a firm foundation for life for all its young people and that all Tottenham residents had access to the opportunities and support that they need to live a long, fulfilling and healthy life; to make sure that the gains of economic growth and regeneration accrued to the people and communities in the area; and to tackle serious issues with violent crime and real concerns about community safety.

But, we were making real progress despite a decade of real terms reductions in funding available to the council, the police and its public sector partners, as a result of government-imposed austerity. I am sad to say that the pandemic has hit Tottenham hard and I am writing to you today to ask for you to help us recover after Covid-19 and commit to backing our residents as part of your levelling up agenda.

Many of Tottenham's residents work in Central London and have been hit hard by closures in retail, leisure and hospitality. In addition, many of Tottenham's local small businesses - which are the backbone of the Tottenham economy- are in the supply chains for these industries and so have suffered as a result.

In Tottenham's significant creative sector the many self-employed residents have seen their work dry up, without access to the protection of the Job Retention Scheme. As a result, Tottenham has seen:

- The second highest rise in Universal Credit claimants of any parliamentary constituency in England
- More than 17% of the working population were on furlough at the peak - with 8% still there as of the end of June 2021 and at risk as the scheme winds down.

Relationships between the police and community are stronger today than they were, but we need to continue this journey. Trust is not what we would want it to be; and as last week's report from the Home Affairs Select Committee again showed, the disproportionate use of stop and search against black as well as other ethnic minority communities continues to be a real problem - in our borough and across the country.

Tottenham still has one of the highest rates of youth violence in London. You have recognised yourself that for communities to be more economically prosperous, people need to be safe.

I am writing to you today because there is a risk - without additional government support-that Tottenham will go backwards economically and that the wider progress that has been made will be lost. As the new Leader of Haringey Council, my

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Cabinet and I are committed to taking the borough forwards by listening, truly listening, to our residents and co-producing solutions with them.

We are determined to tackle the housing crisis by building council homes - an additional 3,000 in the next decade - but also building thriving places with access to work, education, cultural and social activities.

We are building our youth services, with support from the Mayor of London, to ensure that young people are able to make positive choices, have high aspirations and attain the skills to achieve them. But as our core funding comes to an end, we worry that we cannot sustain the work we are doing, in partnership with the community, to provide meaningful activities, diversion, personal support and access to education and training for those young people who need it most.

We are committed to early intervention and are developing an early years strategy to ensure that every child gets off to the best start in life and their parents have all the support that they need to help their child thrive.

I have a 14-month-old baby and know first-hand of some of the challenges faced by parents whose children have been born during the pandemic without the full range of professional, social and family support around them. But we need more investment to embed this.

The effects of climate change including air pollution, extreme weather and flooding hit our least well-off communities hardest. We owe it to our current generation of young people to tackle it and offer hope. We are consulting on two extensive low traffic neighbourhoods in Tottenham as well as piloting new retrofitting schemes, planting trees and encouraging renewable energy generation. All local authorities have a major contribution to make, but they can't do it alone. We need the government to throw its full weight behind a green recovery.

We are driving a local economic recovery by supporting our high streets and town centres; working with key local sectors - including food production and hospitality; and maximising the positive impact of every pound of public money we spend. We are supporting SMEs, the majority of which are owned by members of the BAME community.

With additional investment - to support our residents who have been hit particularly hard by the economic fallout of the pandemic - we could do more to back jobs and drive local economic growth in all sectors from green jobs to small start-ups.

I believe that we can and will achieve transformational change, working with our borough, but I also know that we could go further and faster with more help from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Cllr Peray Ahmet
Leader of the Council

CC:

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

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