



COUNCIL, January 2026

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Subject: Report on Park Safety

SUMMARY

This report is brought forward in response to a previous commitment given at Council. Following debate, the substantive motion carried stated as follows:

This Council recognises some level of antisocial behaviour in our parks. The Council calls on the Administration to produce details of ongoing work to combat and further reduce levels of antisocial behaviour in our parks and to present this report at the meeting of Council.

This report outlines the current crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) landscape in Havering's parks, with a particular focus on Raphael's Park following specific concerns raised at the location over the past 12-18 months.

It also sets out the Administration's position on the cessation of the parks locking and assesses any behavioural impacts noticed as a result of the cessation. It also includes an Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is asked to note the contents of this report.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Metropolitan Police are the primary agency for reporting and investigating crime and ASB. The Council is jointly responsible in assisting with reducing crime

and disorder in its area under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and for addressing serious violence under the Serious Violence Duty.

- 1.2 The Council also has a responsibility for the health and safety of residents using its parks and highways and regularly reviews and assesses risk across its parks and open spaces.
- 1.3 The Council has 89 parks and open spaces across the borough, 22 of which are lockable but not currently locked.

2. Parks Police

- 2.1 There are two officers who are trained and attested Parks Constables in Havering. They are Havering Council employees and are not part of the Metropolitan Police or Royal Parks Constabulary. These officers sit in the wider Havering Council Enforcement Team and report to the Enforcement Manager.
- 2.2 From November 2024 to November 2025, approximately 80 specific requests for patrols were received across all parks (not including Met Police requests for assistance or direction via Airwave).
- 2.3 Generally speaking, except for overnight fishing, rough sleeping and wildlife crime (poaching), the majority of reports occur during the day. Locking the parks historically did not have an impact on these incidents and these activities also often take place in parks which cannot be locked
- 2.4 Crime and ASB is also seasonal in our parks, with more ASB in summer due to good weather, longer days and higher footfall.
- 2.5 Urgent matters reported via 999 can be relayed from Havering Police to LBH Parks Police through their Airwave radio which shares the local Police frequency.
- 2.6 Non-urgent issues can be directed to the Parks Team or Parks Police via contact details on the Council website.
- 2.7 Parks Police operate on a rotating shift pattern (typically 0700–1900, four days on/four off) but are not available 24/7.
- 2.8 As of December 2025, the Parks Police team are being supported by three additional UKSPF Funded posts until March 2026. These posts are primarily funded to support all enforcement team activities in Romford Town Centre and its surrounding parks and estates such as outreach, reassurance and proactive patrolling and to address environmental offences and Anti-Social behaviours.

2.9 Common reports made to Havering Parks Police include:

- Overnight fishing
- Nuisance motorbikes
- Rough sleeping
- Dog-related nuisance (off lead, causing nuisance or fear, dog fouling etc)
- Criminal damage
- Theft of park equipment
- Drug paraphernalia
- Illegal encampments
- Injured wildlife
- High-risk missing persons (MISPERS)

3. Metropolitan Police Data and Analysis

- 3.1 A bespoke dataset focused solely on park-related crime across the borough would require a manual analytical piece of work which the Police typically lack capacity to undertake. However, a one-off analytical exercise, focussed on Raphaels Park was completed by the Met to support this report.
- 3.2 In addition, public data via the Tableau portal (this is the Met Police's Public facing data portal) provides ward-level breakdowns. Comparative analysis from 2020 to 2025 shows that overall offence numbers have fluctuated up and down but remained broadly stable.

Total Notifiable Offences (TNOs)

- 3.3 There has been a slight increase in TNOs across the borough from **20,552 in 2021-22 to 20,911 in 2024-25**. However, this rise is proportionate when compared to population growth.
- 3.4 There have also been changes to reporting methods, a new reporting database used by Police (called Connect) and an increase in awareness and reporting of certain crime types which may also be attributed to affecting the data that has been recorded.

Year-on-Year Crime Trends in Havering

- 3.5 This has shown a decrease in overall crime in the last 12 months compared to the previous year from 22,430 year ending November 2024 versus 20,911 year ending November 2025

Analysis (2024–2025)

- 3.6 Met Police data is categorised by crime type and ward, not specifically by park. We therefore do not have detailed crime data covering all Havering Parks.

3.7 However, as noted, a one-off review of Raphael's Park reported crime by the Met Police found:

- 15 total offences (June 2024-June 2025)
- 13 of these were daytime offences
- 1 was an evening offence (pre locking time)
- 1 was an overnight offence

3.8 Of these offences, the breakdown of crime types is as follows:

- Sexual offences: 2
- Robbery/knife crime: 1
- Public order: 3
- Hate crime: 1
- Violence against the person: 7
- Drug possession: 1

4. Council's own Strategic Analysis

- 4.1 An Annual Community Safety Survey is undertaken by Officers each year. Community Safety Analysts use the survey results to feed into the Strategic Needs Assessment to develop Havering's Serious Violence Strategy (SVS) 2024–2027. In the survey, Parks were not identified as the priority concern, but some fear of crime was noted.
- 4.2 'The Shout' youth survey of 1,029 children revealed the other primary concerns to be:
- 57% **felt unsafe** on streets
 - 34% **felt unsafe** at bus stops/transport hubs
 - 25% **felt unsafe** in parks
- 4.3 This higher perceived risk on streets and in transport hubs (especially Romford Town Centre) is reflected in actual crime stats.
- 4.4 Romford Town Centre remains the borough's primary hotspot for violence and sexual offences. Consequently, resources - including youth outreach, Night Marshals, and CCTV - are concentrated there.
- 4.5 Regular, intensive training (such as WAVE/Ask for Angela) for all staff that work in the footprint and/or are attached to the nighttime economy is also undertaken regularly. The Community Safety Team also carries out a high number of engagement events in the Town Centre with Police colleagues.

- 4.6 More detailed analysis and breakdown of the findings are captured in our Serious Violence Strategy. The headline themes of the Council's SVS are as follows:
- **Youth Violence:** Over 50% of serious violence involves under-25s; Romford is the main hotspot.
 - **Weapon Offences:** Knife-related incidents increased by 19% between 2021-2022.
 - **Domestic Abuse:** Rising cases, especially involving sons as perpetrators; Heaton and Gooshays are key hotspots.
 - **Sexual Violence:** Concentrated in Romford town centre; 36% of victims are under 18.
 - **Shift resources:** Address violence during “lost hours” (3–7 PM) rather than only night-time economy.
 - **Improve intelligence:** there is a need to fill data gaps for future assessments - reporting needs to be encouraged.
 - **Engage communities better:** Reform and increase outreach to reflect borough's changing demographics.
 - **Advocate for resources:** Havering needs more funding to match rising demand.

5. Council Parks ASB Record (2024-2025)

- 5.1 The Council's separate own records for reports across all parks in Havering show:
- 8 reports were separately recorded by the Parks Team in a 12-month period
 - Only 2 incidents occurred after official closing hours (both were low-level, one-off behaviour rowdy/inconsiderate) which were reported as a nuisance
 - Most reported crime and ASB occurs during daytime hours
 - It is noted that residual crime and ASB was present even when parks were locked pre-2022

- 5.2 This shows that overall, reported crime and ASB in our parks is low.

6. Parks Locking

- 6.1 Prior to 2022, parks were locked at or around dusk and reopened at or around 365 days per year. During that period, no specific crime or ASB data was recorded to draw a direct comparison to. At the time, the parks locking service

struggled with recruitment and retention resulting in gaps in the locking rota. This meant that some parks remained open.

- 6.2 Parks ceased being locked as of Autumn 2022 as part of the Council's MTFS savings at that time. The saving made was approximately £0.150m.
- 6.3 Between June 2023 and June 2024, Havering trialled an Enforcement Pilot with National Enforcement Solutions (NES) which saw increased littering enforcement in Parks and Town Centres and also brought back the parks locking service. The Pilot ended because NES struggled to recruit and retain staff which resulted in an ongoing performance issue which left half of the Parks not being locked on a regular basis.
- 6.4 Since June 2024, parks in Havering have not been locked and in the 18 months since June 2024 there has been very little evidence to suggest that this is driving or increasing any crime type when looking at Met Police data for Raphaels Park or internal Park records.
- 6.5 Parks Police Officer observations and knowledge, including Parks Police radio intercepts, indicates that nearly all park-related crime and ASB occurs during daytime hours when parks are open. Locking parks would not prevent these incidents. Of the overnight incidents that have been reported, most of these matters (fishing, rough sleeping, trespassing, drug taking, poaching etc) occurred previously even when the parks were locked.
- 6.6 Whilst it is accepted that a small number of crimes have been alleged to have occurred overnight in our parks since 2022, it cannot be clearly established if the opportunity was created by the park being open, or if the crime would have occurred there (or elsewhere) at another time.
- 6.7 There are no current plans to re-introduce parks locking. It is estimated (via local benchmarking and factoring in inflation) that a basic sufficient park locking service covering 365 days would be in the region of £0.20 - £0.25m

7. Action Plan Going Forward

- 7.1 Whilst the current data does not support the notion of rising crime or increased ASB in parks, there are several measures in place to monitor what is happening within our parks. The detail of this is set out below.
- 7.2 Continued reporting of crime and ASB is essential to build a comprehensive risk picture. All stakeholders must encourage anyone that wishes to report crime or ASB to do so via the correct channels.
- 7.3 In the first instance and especially in an emergency, the Police should be contacted via '999'.

- 7.4 If incidents are of a reoccurring nature, then it may necessitate informing the Parks Police team. Examples of repeat nuisance which may not trigger an immediate Police response but require action, could be:
- a regular gathering of people at a location that causes alarm or nuisance
 - a dog regularly causing nuisance at a location to park users
 - nuisance motorbikes
- 7.5 Any emerging issues are reviewed at Precision Crime meetings (which have replaced the former TTG - Tactical Tasking Co-ordination Group) or the JET group (Joint Enforcement Tasking). The JET is a fortnightly problem solving and tasking group, chaired by the Council and usually attended by all enforcement teams, housing and police colleagues. Other departments or specialist teams can be invited to attend as required (i.e Housing Associations). The Precision Crime meetings are monthly Police meetings and look at monthly crime data, trends and how the Police will be responding to them. This usually focuses on acquisitive crime such as burglary, robbery, vehicle crime and street violence.
- 7.6 If additional resources are required to tackle a trend or emerging pattern, a problem-solving group will be set up by the Enforcement Team.
- 7.7 Alongside the Precision Crime and JET group meetings, the Cabinet Member for Environment receives Lead Member briefings at which parks safety is discussed and any emerging issues and responses briefed.
- 7.8 Officers will also continue to undertake an Annual Community Safety Survey and will apply the insight from that survey to the tactical and strategic decisions taken.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices: None

8. Financial Implications and Risks:

- 8.1 This report has no financial implications for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) or current year budget.
- 8.2 The two Parks Constable posts are a discretionary commitment within the Council's budget at approximately £130,000 per annum. In 2025/26, there is additional one-off funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Grant for the three positions mentioned in this report, which ceases 31st March 2026. The additional posts funded by the UKSF fund are therefore expected to end this financial year.

9. Human Resource Implications and Risks:

9.1 There are no HR implications as part of this report

10. Legal Implications and Risks:

10.1 There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

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