

Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KC MP
Prime Minister
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23rd October 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Transport funding for the London Borough of Bexley

I was shocked and appalled to see you threaten to take £895,000 of highways funding to repair potholes away from our Borough during yesterday's Prime Minister's Questions Time. Residents and businesses in our Borough, facing higher taxes under your Government, are also angry at your suggestion that this funding will be taken away. Your comments were made in response to misinformation provided to you by the MP for Bexleyheath and Crayford. I am writing to you to set out the facts and trust you will support the action we are taking to repair and maintain our roads rather than criticise us.

In his question to you, Mr Francis, who during his time as a Bexley Councillor frequently voted against the investment the Council put into roads and pavements, stated: "the Conservative council cabinet member responsible for roads wrote to our local newspaper, News Shopper, asking that I stop reporting potholes because it was causing work for the council." This is not true and a misrepresentation of the facts. Mr Francis had been reporting issues that were below the qualifying criteria for intervention causing taxpayer funded resources to be spent investigating these minor defects. But given how important highways maintenance is to us, he was encouraged to engage with our highways team to report highways defects in the most effective way. Our Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods wrote in the News Shopper.

"Rather than helping the team, Mr Francis' campaign is causing work that takes them away from highway, road cleansing and fly tipping issues that need to be addressed and corrected – and runs the risk of drowning out reports from our residents, who are excellent at raising matters through FixMyStreet to help us identify problems. I would urge Mr Francis to talk to our Highway Team about his concerns and find out how he can help by working with our reporting process, rather than playing games by bombarding them with requests." (<https://www.newsshopper.co.uk/news/25347598.bexley-potholes-complicated-issue-limited-funds-fix/>)

As you can see, at no point did we suggest that Mr Francis "stop reporting potholes" as he claimed in the Chamber today and he has not taken up our offer to work constructively with us to address highways issues. It is disappointing that rather than work with us, he has chosen to publicly spread misinformation and it is concerning that you appear to believe his claims.

When giving you his question in advance to procure from you a partisan answer, Mr Francis may not have provided you with these facts. However, it is very concerning that you and your officials have not checked the facts yourself. Had you checked your facts, you would know that we are investing in our highways and spending the funding we have been allocated - although not all of it has been received - in accordance with the criteria set by the Government.

Indeed, the road that Mr Francis referenced in his question to you, Mayplace Road East, is already in our programme for resurfacing works in this financial year. Had you been aware of the facts, you could have thanked us for investing in that road rather than threaten to take the funding away.

Our budget monitoring report, which Mr Francis has referred to in the media, states that the funding will all be spent. As you will know, as the funding is for capital expenditure meaning there are strict rules on how it can be used and it cannot be used to repair all potholes or defects as some repairs fall under revenue expenditure. In addition, we also did not receive from the Government the full terms and conditions of this funding and details on the reporting requirements until sometime after the funding was announced and we also provide returns to the Department for Transport on our expenditure. At no point have officials raised any issues or concerns with us, in fact they continue to release funds for us to use, therefore highlighting the vacuous and unfounded nature of the claims being made by Mr Francis and poor judgement on your part to suggest and threaten the removal of this funding.

You will also be interested to know that in recent years the investment we have put into our highways - and opposed by Mr Francis during his time as a Councillor - has meant the repair of thousands of potholes and highways defects and the repairing, restructuring and resurfacing of dozens of roads every year. In fact, the condition of our roads is better than many other Boroughs. This has been achieved despite the fact that the current Mayor of London has slashed the funding provided by the GLA for highways matters from around £7m under his predecessor in the 2016/17 budget, to barely £1m in recent years. Moreover, motorists in our Borough have been punished by the Mayor of London's ULEZ charges, which were imposed on us against our wishes and backed by Mr Francis and members of your Government.

In your comments in the House of Commons, you said that the Roads Minister would follow up on this issue. I would be delighted to meet with the Roads Minister or Secretary of State to show them the work we are doing repairing roads and responding to pothole reports, show how the condition of our roads are better than many other Boroughs, and discuss with them the significant infrastructure investment we would like to see in our transport network - including extending the Elizabeth Line through our Borough to Ebbsfleet, extending the DLR through the Belvedere and beyond, and new river crossings to support economic growth and new sustainable housing. Perhaps you would have the resources available to fund these projects if you didn't decide to handover £35bn of taxpayers' money to Mauritius as part of your Chagos Surrender Deal. Just think of the roads that could be fixed and repaired in Bexley and across the country with a small fraction of that money you are needlessly giving away.

I look forward to your reply and receiving your personal assurances that the funding offered by the Government is not under threat; and that in future you will check your facts before causing concern to our residents and businesses and criticising the work undertaken by hardworking council staff and our contractors. I trust you will also correct the record in Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Leaf', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cllr David Leaf
Deputy Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Resources