

NOTES - SCRUTINY MEETING (RETAIL CRIME) - 10 OCTOBER 2024

| Question | Brief Summary of Evidence | Decision of PCC |
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| <p>1. When making comparisons with the data reported at the Scrutiny Meeting on 2 November 2023, what is the current scale of retail crimes in Cleveland (the types of crimes being committed - including assaults against retail workers, the number of crimes being reported and the number of crimes receiving a police response)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail crime is defined as any criminal act (intended and unintended) against the retail industry i.e. a store, a company, their properties as well as their employees and customers. • In terms of retail crime, the following categories can be included - shoplifting, business robbery, commercial burglary, theft by an employee and making off without payment. • Whilst the introduction of a standalone criminal offence for assaulting a retail worker is currently subject to discussion at a national level, this proposal is yet to be implemented, and the Force continues to record offences in line with the National Crime Recording Standard. • Retail crime levels (i.e., business robbery, commercial burglary and shoplifting) are monitored across all four districts (Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton) and are reported to the Force's Impact Board on a monthly basis. • Each crime type is monitored, with comparisons showing the difference between the local rate per 1000 population and the average rate for the Most Similar Groups (MSG) and the national average. • A number of factors impact police attendance - this includes whether an offender has left the scene or been let go before the Force is called, how soon after the incident it is reported, whether a retailer may not support a prosecution, or when officers are dealing with or are diverted to an urgent incident elsewhere. • Although some retail crimes that are reported may not warrant an immediate police attendance, they will receive a police response. • In terms of retail crimes for the 12 months ending September 2024, Cleveland had the highest rate of shoplifting, the 4th highest rate of commercial burglary and the 11th highest rate of business robbery. • In terms of investigative outcomes and solved crime rates, the Force was performing well and above the national average for theft from shops, above the MSG average and the national average for commercial burglary and significantly above the MSG average and national average for business robbery. • Nationally, the cost of retail theft is £970 per crime, including a cost of £40 per crime for the police and £200 per crime for the wider criminal justice system. This equates to a total cost of £7,843,420 per annum including £323,440 for the police and £1,617,200 for the wider criminal justice system. | <p style="text-align: center;">Assured</p> |

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| <p>2. What work has the Force undertaken to demonstrate its commitment to the Retail Crime Action Plan?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force has an Operational Lead for Retail Crime who chairs bi-monthly Retail Crime Meetings. • The Retail Crime Meetings are attended by the Single Point of Contacts (SPOC) for each of the four districts and a representative from the National Business Crime Solutions Team. • In support of the Retail Crime Action Plan, a local action plan has been developed and work has been undertaken to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review/revise the Force's response criteria; • identify Cleveland's most prolific offenders; • increase the use of Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO); • identify Cleveland's most vulnerable locations; • develop collaborative problem-solving plans; • enhance proactivity; and • work with partners and Pegasus. • To demonstrate its commitment to the Retail Crime Action Plan, the Force is working to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the use of drug testing in custody; • improve the use of facial recognition; and • increase the use of Out of Court Resolutions (OoCR). • The Force is committed to tackling shoplifting and prioritising attendance where violence is involved, or a shoplifter is detained. • At the point of first contact, a robust threat assessment is carried out using THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement). • Police attendance for retail crime, as with other crime, is prioritised if an immediate/emergency or priority response is required. • The Force has a clear and consistent approach in place and all reasonable lines of enquiry are pursued to help identify suspects. | |
| <p>3. What problem-solving work has the Force undertaken with retailers to catch perpetrators, identify repeat offenders and prevent new offences?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst retail theft is high in Cleveland, there is little evidence that it is organised, many of the suspects arrested are local offenders. • The causal factors for the national increase in retail crime, differ from those experienced locally. • Previous analysis has shown that offences are committed for various reasons, including to fund drug habits thus identifying an indirect link with serious and organised crime (SOC). • Patterns and trends relating to national organised crime threats are received via Opal and are used to inform local and regional scanning work. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies demonstrate that the Force's collaborative problem-solving work, with local retailers and other key stakeholders, has resulted in a reduction in offending and a noticeable absence of persistent perpetrators. | |
| 4. Since the Scrutiny Meeting held on 2 November and the introduction of Pegasus, are businesses being proactive in investing in crime prevention measures and sharing intelligence with the Force to design out crime? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent and protect activity is key to reducing retail crime, as is the digital transfer of CCTV footage. The importance of the Force and the PCC working jointly to challenge public perceptions and encourage retail premises to report crimes to the police was highlighted. Although reporting an incident of retail crime may not receive an immediate or priority police response, it is crucial that all crimes are reported. The Force can then record those crimes and utilise the intelligence gathered to target resources and inform problem-solving/intervention work. The crimes reported to the Force inform future planning, therefore, it is imperative that retailers report all crimes to ensure that trends can be detected, and the appropriate action can be taken to tackle retail crime. Partnership working with retailers, and other key stakeholders, is vital and police tactical options should only be used as part of a wider response to retail crime. Safer Business Action Week is co-ordinated by the National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) and starts on Monday 14 October until Sunday 20 October. The Safer Business Action Week provides a platform for the Force to work with retailers to discuss crime prevention activities and identify and catch prolific offenders who cause the greatest harm to businesses and staff. The promotion of the community safety accreditation scheme (CSAS) across all four districts, and the granting a limited range of legal powers to accredited persons working in retail, would assist in enhancing partnership working and the sharing of information and intelligence. | |
| 5. What positive outcomes have been achieved by the Force when aiming to prevent crime, safeguard shopworkers and target offenders? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies demonstrate that the Force has undertaken problem-solving work to target areas with high levels of retail crime and prolific offenders. Case studies provide evidence that, by working in partnership, the Force is proactive in delivering innovative approaches to support crime prevention and help achieve a reduction in offending. In addition to its problem-solving work, two examples of Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) were provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A prolific female shoplifter was issued with a CBO. As a result of the CBO, the female has not committed any further shop thefts. A town centre prolific and aggressive male beggar was issued with a CBO. The male breached the imposed conditions of the CBO and was subsequently sentenced to six months in prison. | |

Action

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| 1 | That the Force undertakes work to ascertain whether Auror, or another retail crime intelligence and loss prevention platform, can be accessed to utilise crime intelligence and collect evidence. |
| 2 | <p>That the PCC holds a retail crime summit to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• promote the community safety accreditation scheme (CSAS) to retail businesses across Cleveland's four districts;• challenge the perceptions of the police response to retail crime; and• encourage retailers to actively participate in prevent and protect activity. |