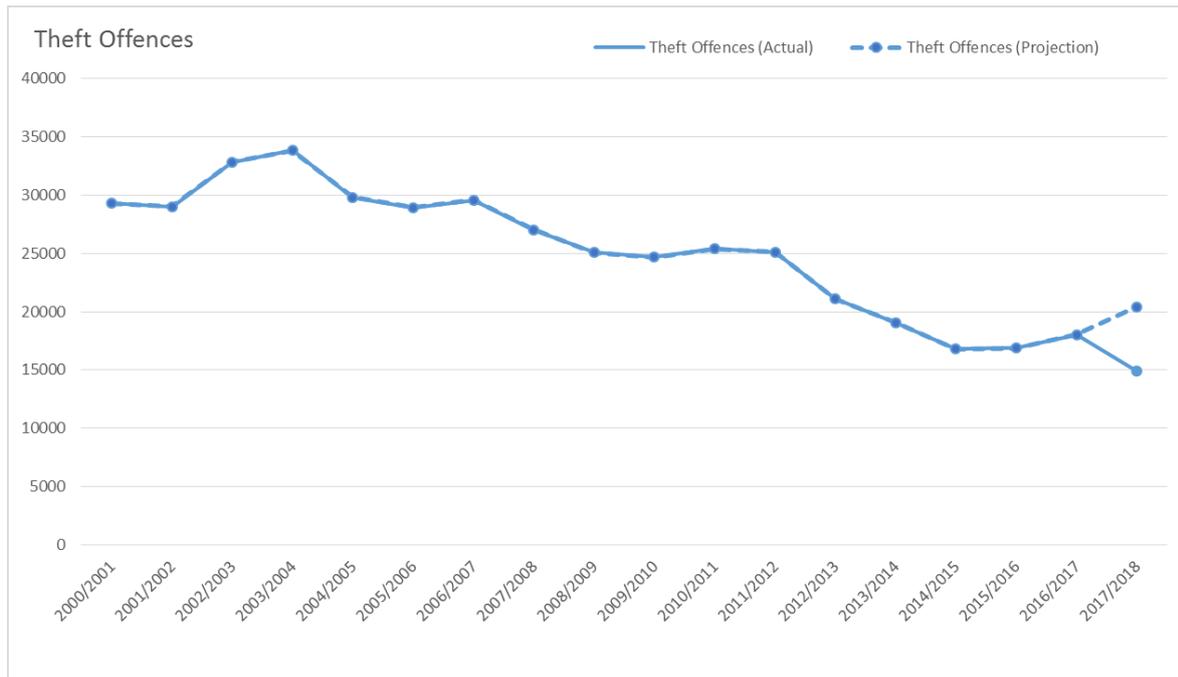


Acquisitive Crime Levels in Surrey

After many years of decline, police recorded acquisitive¹ crime (burglary, vehicle theft, theft from vehicles, theft from persons, bike theft) is showing a rising trend. This is being seen nationally, in the South East region and in Surrey. In particular in Surrey, the increases are being seen in the North West of the county, in areas which border London.

For 1 April to 30 November 2017, Surrey Police has recorded 13,607 compared to 11,558 during the same period in 2016. This is an increase of 17.7%, 2049 more offences. However, to put this in context, 2016/17 saw low levels of such offences, after many years of decline.



The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) wants to make sure Surrey Police are doing all they can to address increases in acquisitive crime. He has scrutinised the Chief Constable at performance meetings² on levels of crime and asked for further briefings from local neighbourhood inspectors about force activity.

Some residents (at meetings and a small number via e-mail) have raised concerns with the PCC and Surrey County Council (SCC) that switching off street lighting at night has been a factor in causing the increase in acquisitive crime. Changes to street lighting are a decision for Surrey County Council. However, at the time when concerns were first raised in October 2017, the PCC commissioned an analysis of the effect of street lighting on total crime levels and specifically at night, which didn't find a link.

However, an analysis by the College of Policing found that, in the UK, street lighting has a positive effect on acquisitive crime with evidence of reduction across the day and during hours of darkness.³

¹ Acquisitive crime in this briefing refers to burglary, car theft, theft from cars and other theft affecting streets (i.e. excluding shoplifting, employee theft, electricity theft, blackmail, theft of mail).

² Webcasts of the PCC scrutinising the Chief Constable on crime levels can be seen at www.surrey-pcc.gov.uk

³ <http://library.college.police.uk/docs/what-works/What-works-briefing-improved-street-lighting-2013.pdf>

In response to further concerns from residents, the PCC commissioned a detailed analysis from the Surrey Police Performance Analysis team to understand the impact of part-night street lighting in Surrey on specifically acquisitive crime taking into account the College of Policing analysis. Any change to street lighting is a decision for Surrey County Council but police crime data analysis can provide information to aid decision making.

The most recent report from Surrey Police on part-night lighting and the effect on acquisitive crime in Surrey can be read on the PCC's website, [link](#). This is a detailed statistical report but its findings are that:

- There does appear to be a relationship in which street light could be seen as a protective factor against increase year on year perception increases in crime committed between 00.00 and 05.00 although this finding could not be considered statistically significant. Some wards with part-night lighting have seen increases in acquisitive crime. Others have seen reductions making it difficult to come to firm conclusions about the impact.
- For Surrey, increases in overall acquisitive crime began before the implementation of the part-night street lighting programme and increases have been replicated by other police force areas which haven't had changes to street lighting. However, Surrey has seen a greater increase than some force other areas which could be explained by part-night lighting, but lower increases than in the rest of the South East between April and June 2017 compared to the same period in 2016.
- People in many areas of Surrey, when surveyed, are saying that they are feeling less safe at night. The report recommends that Surrey Police and SCC understand why there have been reductions in perceptions of safety.

In addition, the report notes that Surrey Police should be carrying out other activity to combat the displacement of offences, especially in areas bordering London. This includes actions such as forensic property marking - 'Smartwater' or similar products which have been used successfully in London and may be displacing crime.

The PCC has scrutinised what Surrey Police are doing with regard to increases in acquisitive crime. The force has a specific campaign and updates on actions being taken include:

- Covert tactics to hunt down and arrest burglars and handlers of stolen goods
- Gathering intelligence and proactively targeting suspected offenders
- Patrolling hotspot areas
- Giving crime prevention advice to the public and urging them to report any suspicious activity
- Specific crime prevention advice to vulnerable locations
- The setting up of 'trap' houses in certain locations kitted out with hidden cameras and gadget with tracking devices
- Forensic marking of property in hotspot areas which allow identification of both property and also leave marks on offenders which can be detected by police

There are signs of success with a number of arrests taking place in recent months. More about these arrests, as well as crime prevention advice can be read on the Surrey Police website <https://surrey.police.uk/>

Surrey Police also asks the public to take crime prevention steps including:

- Locking doors and windows when going out and leaving lights on, particularly if going away on holiday
- Locking cars and if vulnerable to theft (white vans and those with electronic car key systems) consider buying a steering lock
- Keep car keys away from doors, cat-flaps etc.
- Keeping sheds and garden gates locked and secured
- Registering property (lap-tops, phones, bikes etc.) with a company such as immobilise (www.immobilise.com)
- Signing up to the community information system *In the Know* (www.intheknow.community) for latest advice, information on crimes in your area and local initiatives
- Support or set up a local Neighbourhood Watch scheme

Assistant Chief Constable Nev Kemp said:

“Where we have seen increases in acquisitive crime we have not seen that there is a link to changes in street lighting. Our priority has been to respond to increases by using a variety of tactics to prevent crime and bring criminals to justice.

We continue to work with council colleagues and other partners where there are concerns about particular local areas to problem solve the best solution to keep our communities safe.

We are always considering new evidence that will help us to tackle crime and keep the people of Surrey safe”

The PCC has said: “Crime levels in areas such as burglary, theft and vehicle crime have seen a recent rise across the country and we are not immune here in Surrey. I have listened to the concerns of some residents about whether there is a link between this increase and the part-night street lighting in the county and have commissioned two reports to look into the facts behind it.

“It is important to consider these reports in the wider context of that rise in acquisitive crime and I am committed to supporting the Chief Constable in any way I can to tackle it.”

Overall, Surrey remains a safe place to live with lower crime levels than other areas of the country and a long-term trend of reductions in acquisitive crime. Surrey Police is taking action against the recent increases in acquisitive crime. Residents are asked to be vigilant, to take crime prevention measures and to report any crimes or suspicious activity.

The PCC has further said:

“Given that there is no statistically significant link found between street lighting and crime levels in Surrey we cannot draw firm conclusions and I cannot go as far as to make a recommendation that Surrey County Council review its street lighting policy on the basis of crime levels. However, SCC has been provided with a copy of the street lighting analysis report and Surrey Police and Surrey County Council will be discussing the findings.”