



## Retail Crime Briefing

<b>Required for:</b>	<i>PCC Performance Meeting December 2020</i>
<b>Security Classification:</b>	<b>Official</b>
<b>Handling information if required:</b>	
<b>Suitable for publication:</b>	Yes
<b>Title:</b>	Surrey Police Approach to Retail Crime
<b>Version:</b>	1.0
<b>Purpose:</b>	PCC Performance Meeting Briefing
<b>ACPO / Strategic Lead:</b>	T/ACC Barlow
<b>NDM / OSARA compliance:</b>	No
<b>Date created:</b>	01/12/2020
<b>Date to be reviewed:</b>	NA

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### What are the Policing Principles?

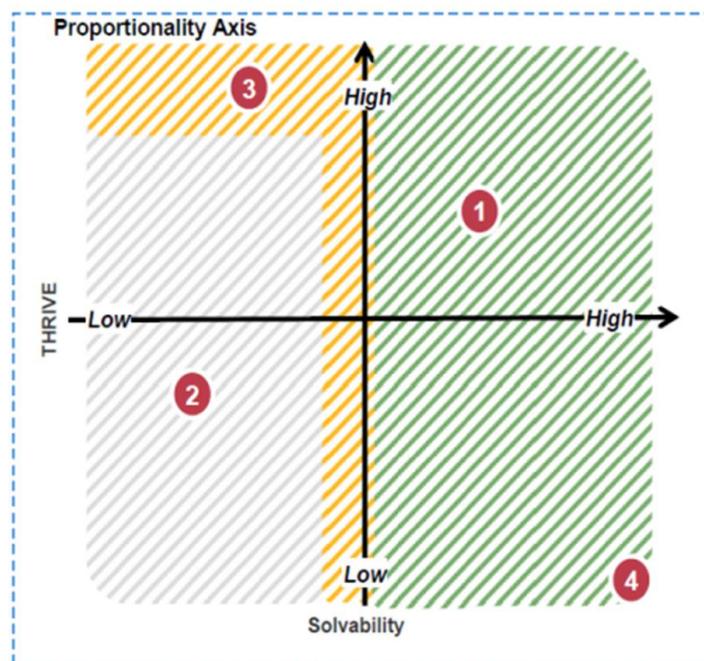
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|----------------|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Accountability | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Fairness   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Honesty      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Integrity      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Leadership | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Objectivity  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Openness       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Respect    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Selflessness | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

## 1. Background

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide a briefing for the PCC Performance Meeting on the approach taken to Retail Crime. The PCC has requested this report to understand what the police in Surrey are doing to respond to crimes committed against retailers and their employees.
- 1.2. Currently there are no specific flags on the NICHE crime recording system that identify crime records as being Retail Crime, however offences are flagged as 'Business Crime' in the local qualifier code allowing the identification of offences against businesses more generally. In considering this paper, I have identified that the bulk of offences that will affect retailers across the County and within the scope of this paper will fall under the following classifications: Shoplifting, Robbery of Commercial Premises and Violent Crime (assault and public order offences) flagged as Business Crimes.

## 2. Allocation Criteria for Investigations

- 2.1. The current approach to the allocation of all criminal offences for investigation is based upon the THRIVE methodology where the offence is assessed for the following factors: Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigative opportunities, Vulnerability and Engagement. The use of the THRIVE framework allows the OMU and supervisors to make a proportionality assessment by balancing solvability with threat, harm and risk to decide on whether to investigate a crime or not. This can be best explained using the following model:



Cases with medium or high threat, harm and risk will usually fall into the area marked 1 and 4, these will always be allocated for investigation, even where the solvability factors are low. Cases that are low on threat, harm and risk with limited solvability factors will fall in the area marked 2 and will not be prioritised for investigation. The orange sector marked 3, are the areas where threat, harm and risk may be lower but solvability can be higher. Cases that fall within this area require professional judgement on the proportionality of investigating the case, often factors such as whether the victim has been repeatedly targeted or the suspect is involved in more wide-ranging criminality as well as local issues will be considered in the decision making for these cases. Additionally potential damage to the reputation of the police service through not investigating a case with a known suspect, will also be a consideration.

### 2.2. Robbery of Commercial Premises

- 2.2.1. Where a retail premises is targeted for an offence of Robbery, will always involve some

degree of violence being threatened or used. This will result in the THRIVE assessment falling into the medium or high category, and as such these offences will always be allocated for investigation. Usually these offences will attract a grade 1 or 2 deployment of NPT officers to the scene immediately during or after the offence has taken place to search for suspects and secure evidence. Offences where there are aggravating factors including the use of weapons or serious assaults occurring in the commission of the offence, will be allocated to CID for investigation by PIP level 2 investigators.

### **2.3. Shoplifting**

- 2.3.1.** Reports of a shoplifting offence in progress, that has recently occurred or where a suspect has been detained by staff or security officers will be subject of a THRIVE assessment in the Contact Centre (CTC), likely leading to Grade 1 or 2 deployment of NPT officers. The grading of the deployment will be based on the individual circumstances at the time and be subject of continual review until officers attend the location.
- 2.3.2.** Offences of shoplifting where the suspect has already left the scene, circumstances which account for the bulk of reports, will be recorded by CTC and allocated to OMU for assessment. The majority of such offences will likely fall into the low or medium THRIVE category unless any aggravating factors occur such as the use threats of violence or abusive language to make good an escape. As a result, unless there are any strong solvability factors in the case, it will fall into category 2 and not be allocated for investigation. Additional aggravating factors such as significant repeat offending or impact on the viability of a small business will increase the THRIVE assessment level and move the case into section 3 or 4, increasing the likelihood of allocation for investigation.
- 2.3.3.** Some offences that fall into category 2 may have potential CCTV lines of enquiry, these offences will be allocated to the Telephone Investigation Bureau (TIB) in OMU to obtain CCTV still images and attempt to identify the suspect from these. The process of submitting CCTV images has been improved for victims of crime utilising the NICE Investigates system, making the submission of CCTV more timely and straightforward. If a suspect is identified it will then be allocated to NPT to progress, otherwise it will be filed.
- 2.3.4.** Where a clear suspect is identified for the offence or there are viable lines of enquiry such as vehicle index with a known user, this will be allocated for investigation by OMU to the relevant NPT team. Each case will then be reviewed by the NPT supervisor for proportionality with the vast majority of cases being investigated to a conclusion by NPT officers.

### **2.4. Violent Crime and Public Order Offences**

- 2.4.1.** Offences of violent crime and public order will be assessed against the THRIVE criteria by the CTC at the point of initial call. If the suspect remains on scene or nearby and there is a threat of further violence, the suspect has been detained or serious injuries have resulted, it is likely NPT officers will be deployed on a Grade 1 or 2 response depending on the circumstances. This will remain under continual review until officers arrive on scene.
- 2.4.2.** Offences of violent crime and public order where the suspect has already left the scene, in the vast majority of cases will be recorded by CTC and allocated to OMU for assessment. The OMU will apply the THRIVE assessment on a case by case basis considering the factors such as the level of any injury caused, repeat victimisation, aggravating factors such as the use of a weapon or likelihood of recurrence as well as solvability factors in their assessment. As such each offence will be assessed on its own unique factors in the consideration of whether to allocate the offence to NPT to investigate.

## **3. The Impact of Lockdown and Coronavirus Mitigation Measures**

- 3.1.** The Coronavirus pandemic has created a unique situation in 2020 for retailers, not only through the economic pressures caused to the majority of the sector, but also by placing them at the frontline of the battle to limit the spread of the virus within the community. On a national level this has exacerbated the perception of increasing crime and violence towards retail staff that was already being felt within the sector.

- 3.2. During the initial lockdown period only essential retailers were allowed to remain open, with Supermarkets and other providers of essential goods seeing significant increases in demand. Due to the need to manage appropriate social distancing in stores, staff were required to limit the number of people entering at any given time resulting in long queues outside supermarkets at peak times causing concerns about frustrations from those waiting a considerable time to enter. Latterly the requirement for the public to wear face coverings when in shops has added a further measure that shop staff are expected to direct the public to comply with prior to entering a shop.
- 3.3. The vast majority of the Surrey public have complied with the measures required as a condition of entry to shops throughout the pandemic, and have been supportive of staff seeking to implement those requirements. However there have been a very small minority of individuals who have reacted with resistance and aggression to challenge by shop staff during this time period.
- 3.4. Cognisant of this impact on the retailers of Surrey during the first lock down period, dedicated Operation Apollo resources were tasked to attend periodically each day a number of key vulnerable sites across the county including large shops and supermarkets. The purpose of the deployments were to provide reassurance to staff and a visible presence to deter those who may have been inclined react in an abusive manner to staff working to keep the public safe whilst they shopped. As lockdown measures were reduced and the retail sector returned to a more normal mode of operating, the requirement for such patrols were diminished until the commencement of the November lockdown where dedicated resources were reinstated to this purpose.
- 3.5. In order to assess the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on crime levels in the retail sector, a comparison of crime levels for the period of April to October 2020 has been conducted against the same period in 2019. In summary the majority of crime types that have been identified as affecting retailers; Robbery of Business Property, Shoplifting, Assaults (GBH, ABH & Common Assault) with a business crime flag, have all reduced in volume during 2020. To an extent this is to be expected due to the closure of significant proportions of the retail estate in Surrey during this period. However public order offences, likely driven by the measures required of retailers during the pandemic, have increased in volume by 14.7% (21 offences). A full breakdown of crime and positive outcome rates can be found at Appendix A.

#### **4. Future Approach**

- 4.1. It has been recognised by Surrey Police that as the capacity of policing increases through Operation Uplift, there is an opportunity to refocus our approach to engagement with the business community of Surrey, including the retail sector. Currently Safer Neighbourhood Teams engage with business representatives in their areas and seek to address problems that are presented to them. However it is recognised that this has led to an inconsistent approach across Surrey with no clear and transparent expectation of the level of service that businesses will receive.
- 4.2. In order to enhance our approach, a Business Crime Portfolio has been created, led by Chief Inspector Mark Offord with a strategy that sets out the commitment of Surrey Police to work in partnership with the businesses of Surrey and their representative bodies. The strategy aims to recognise and understand the harm caused by business crime and improve the reporting of business crime to allow a full picture of crime in the county. Closer co-operation at a local level is central to the strategy, enabling the sharing of intelligence and an effective problem solving approach to be taken to reduce the impact of crime on those businesses most significantly affected, whilst targeting persistent offenders and organised criminality who perpetrate against businesses. A copy of the draft Business Crime strategy is include at appendix B.

#### **5. Conclusion[s]**

- 5.1. The Surrey Police approach to the investigation of retail crime is consistent with the allocation practices for all other crime types recorded within Surrey. By their nature however, the majority of reports of retail crime are of low threat, harm and risk, and as result unless significant solvability factors exist, they will not be further investigated. Having reviewed the feedback on the NBCC survey of all forces, this is consistent with the majority of Police Forces in England and Wales. This should reassure retailers across Surrey that there is no arbitrary rule such as a minimum value under which police will not investigate. Each report will be assessed on its own individual circumstances.

5.2. The PCC and the wider public should be reassured that Surrey Police are seeking to improve the consistency with which engagement, information sharing and crime prevention in partnership with retailers is conducted. Through the business crime strategy the force aims to enhance the confidence businesses have in Surrey Police so that they and their employees can feel safe in their workplaces.

5.3. The retail sector, particularly essential shops such as supermarkets have been at the forefront of the national response to the Coronavirus pandemic and it is recognised significant exceptional demands have been placed upon them during 2020. Analysis of crime types that can be identified as those primarily affecting retailers shows that acquisitive and violent crime volumes in Surrey have reduced since April 2020, whilst public order offences have increased likely driven by Coronavirus mitigation requirements. The proportion of retail crimes of overall offending in Surrey also remains low, accounting for 5.1% of all Total Notifiable Offences this year to date, compared to 6.55% for the same period last year.

## 6. Decision[s] Required

6.1. None, this paper is for information and discussion only.

## 7. Attachments / Background Papers

### Appendix A

#### Crime Volumes & Positive Outcome Rates

FYTD	CRIME				Positive Outcomes (inc Resolutions)				Positive Outcome Rate		
	Last Year	This Year	#	%age	Last Year	This Year	#	%age	Last Year	This Year	%age
<b>Total Notifiable Offences (TNO)</b>	<b>45111</b>	<b>41240</b>	<b>-3871</b>	<b>-8.6%</b>	<b>6139</b>	<b>5650</b>	<b>-489</b>	<b>-8.0%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>
Robbery of business property	27	19	-8	-29.6%	4	10	6	150.0%	14.8%	52.6%	37.8%
Shoplifting	2570	1744	-826	-32.1%	588	261	-327	-55.6%	22.9%	15.0%	-7.9%
Common Assault (Business Crime flag)	161	131	-30	-18.63%	29	24	-5	-17.24%	18.0%	18.3%	0.30%
ABH (Business Crime flag)	52	32	-20	-38.46%	20	15	-5	-25.00%	38.5%	46.9%	8.40%
GBH (Business Crime flag)	0	0	0		0	0	0				
Public Order (Business Crime flag)	143	164	21	14.69%	21	25	4	19.05%	14.70%	15.20%	0.50%
Retail Crime Approximate Proportion of all TNO	6.55%	5.07%									

### Appendix B



Surrey Police  
Business Crime Strat