



Safer Melton Partnership - Focus on Town Centre Retail Crime

Report Author:	Aysha Rahman , Assistant Director, Customers and Communities David Walker , Strategic Lead Safer Communities
Chief Officer Responsible:	Michelle Howard , Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Sarah Cox , Chair of the Safer Melton Partnership (Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property & Resources)

Corporate Priority:	Healthy Communities and Neighbourhoods
Wards Affected:	All
Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):	N/A
Exempt Information:	No

1 Summary

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of the Chair of the Safer Melton Partnership. It provides an update on the work of the partnership to support businesses and to address retail crime.

2 Recommendation

That Council:

2.1 **Notes the review and update from the Chair of the Safer Melton Partnership on actions to address retail crime within the town centre.**

3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 Further to a motion supported by Full Council in December 2023, the Chair of the Safer Melton Partnership (SMP) was asked to provide a report outlining what the partnership intends to do about retail crime in the area.
- 3.2 This report responds to that resolution, which has been discussed by the Safer Melton Partnership. It outlines the current situation within Melton town centre regarding retail crime and what actions the Safer Melton Partnership have done and intend to undertake to reduce future incidents and support our local retailers.

4 Background

- 4.1 At a meeting of Full Council in December 2023, a [motion relating to retail crime](#) was unanimously supported. It was resolved that Council:
- Condemns any abuse suffered by our retail workers and calls on all partners to ensure that retail and supermarket workers can have confidence that their reports of such behaviour are acted on swiftly and appropriately and;
 - Tasks the Leader and Deputy Leader to write to the Chair of the Melton Safer Community Partnership, highlighting the issues in the motion and asks for a report on what the Melton Safer Community Partnership intend to do, to be brought back for consideration by Council at the meeting on 18 April 2024.
- 4.2 Due to a change of chairing responsibilities for the Safer Melton Partnership, the report back to Council was subsequently scheduled for the meeting of Full Council in July 2024.
- 4.3 The Safer Melton Partnership (SMP), also more widely known as the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was formed due to the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. This Act placed a statutory duty on the Police, Local Authority, County Council, Primary Care Trust, Police Authority, Probation Trust, and Fire Authority to work collaboratively to develop and implement a community safety strategy designed to reduce crime and Anti-Social Behaviour within the Melton Borough.
- 4.4 The partnership also engages with as many local agencies and voluntary groups as possible to achieve a community-based multi-agency approach to crime reduction.
- 4.5 Following concerns raised regarding retail crime and ASB incidents within the town centre, Council requested further investigation into these concerns. These include:
- a) Groups of youth accessing businesses' roof tops, causing damage to property, and intimidating staff and members of the public.
 - b) Confrontational and inconsiderate behaviour intimidating staff and visitors to the town centre.
- 4.6 Over recent years, shop theft has become more commonplace nationally. Not only does this impact businesses and employees, but it also has wider implications to the community as businesses may need to increase pricing to recover lost revenue. Due to the current cost of living crisis, this is even more concerning for our residents and families. It's reported by British Retail Consortium (BRC) that the cost of shop lifting has doubled since 2022 from approximately £953 million to over £1.8 billion annually.
- 4.7 Nationally, nearly half a million incidents of abuse towards retail staff were recorded last year, according to BRC. This is an increase of 50% on the previous year of 2022.

- 4.8 In early 2024, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council wrote to the Chair of the Safer Melton Partnership regarding these concerns and requested information on the actions being taken to address this issue at a local level and especially within a wider context of a national increase. The letter is attached as **Appendix 1**.

5 Main Considerations

5.1 The Data

5.1.1 National

- a) Since the Covid 19 pandemic, retail crime is reported to have increased nationally. British Retail Consortium (BRC) report that the number of violent and abusive incidents in a retail setting has risen by 50% with approximately 1,300 per day.
- b) It is also reported that the total number of theft incidents per day is approximately 45,000 per day, with an annual cost to retailers of £1.8 billion. It's estimated that retailers have also spent a total of £1.2 billion on crime prevention, through CCTV, security personnel and body worn cameras. This taking the total cost to over £3 billion.
- c) The BRC also report that over 60% of retailers were dissatisfied with the Police response.

5.1.2 Countywide

- a) In Leicestershire, like the national trend, retail crime is reported to have has increased.
- b) There is public interest in this matter, and local media reports have recently covered the national and local trend in this regard. According to this [Leicester Mercury news article](#) one district saw an increase in retail theft of over 100% increase in thefts.

5.1.3 Melton

- a) Whilst the national and Leicestershire picture is one of increasing incidents for retail theft, the Melton Borough has seen a decrease in retail theft, with a 6% reduction in 2023 from the previous year. This is also referenced in the news article and from police data.
- b) Melton is one of among only 12 Local Authorities nationally to buck the rising trend.

5.2 Further Melton Context

5.2.1 The Safer Communities team recently conducted a retail crime and ASB focused survey of local town centre businesses.

5.2.2 This survey provided a snapshot of the views and current understanding of local town centre businesses in relation to retail crime.

5.2.3 15 businesses responded to the survey:

- a) 44% of the businesses stated they experienced frequent incidents of retail crime and ASB.
- b) 47% of the businesses felt that retail crime has increased over the last 12 months in their store.
- c) However, 67% of staff stated they felt safe at work, with 93% knowing how to report an incident.
- d) Over half of the businesses surveyed are now using a reporting tool known as 'the DISC app' as a tool to report incident of theft and ASB within their stores.

e) Of the businesses using the DISC app, 75% stated they have noticed an increase in enforcement action against the perpetrators and are confident with using the DISC app.

5.2.4 The full results of the survey are attached as **Appendix 2**.

5.2.5 We have also provided the Police data in relation to Melton as **Appendix 3**:

a) The data from April 2023 to March 24 shows a drop in retail theft in Melton town.

b) Melton is one of only a small number of towns across England and Wales who have seen a reduction in retail thefts.

c) Melton Town Centre has reported 71 retail thefts, this is a 13.4% reduction on the previous year, significantly bucking the national trend.

d) Across the Melton Borough, there have been 191 reported retail thefts in comparison to 201 for the previous year, a 5% reduction.

e) There have also been 42 offences recorded within retail stores across the Melton Borough that are recorded as either public order or violence with injury (Assault). This is a 2.3% reduction on the previous year:

f) Melton town centre has had 21 recorded offences of either public order or assault, this is a reduction of 4.5% on the previous year.

5.3 When considered against the national picture, Melton's position in relation to retail crime and ASB is more positive both within the town centre and across the Borough. Factors such as the size of the borough and concentrated social media focus in small communities can skew the perception of crime and ASB activity that is not reflective of the actual data.

5.4 However, we also acknowledge that even a small number of incidents within a small community can have a disproportionate impact and are not complacent in our approach to supporting our local businesses and town centre residents.

5.5 **Activity to Date**

5.5.1 **DISC**

5.5.2 In May 2023 the Safer Melton Partnership funded the introduction of the DISC app to the Safer Melton Against Retail Theft (SMART) members for a period of 12 months.

5.5.3 DISC helps support our retailers report incidents of retail crime and ASB through an interactive app that links businesses with both the Local Authority and the Police. This enables quicker and UK GDPR compliant transfer of information and evidence to allow a robust process leading to meaningful outcomes such as warnings and fines relating to antisocial behaviour and crime.

5.5.4 This isn't a replacement to 999 or 101 but a link between members, Police and Local Authority and helps build intelligence on offenders, improves communication and is compliant with UK GDPR.

5.5.5 The information provided through DISC helps Melton Borough Council and the Police take formal action against offenders, such as, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's), Community Protection Warnings (CPW's) and Community Protection Notices (CPN's).

5.5.6 It also has the potential to assist with wider enforcement actions, such as injunctions and Criminal Behaviour Orders (CRIMBO's).

5.5.7 Between April 23 and March 24 Melton Borough Council issued 11 CPW's and 2 CPN's with the help of the DISC app.

- 5.5.8 The enforcement results achieved through DISC strengthened the value that the app brought to local businesses in tackling retail crime and ASB at a local level.
- 5.5.9 To encourage more businesses to use the app and subsequently reduce the annual cost to businesses for retaining the app, the SMP agreed to fund the app for a further 12 months.
- 5.5.10 At a recent shop theft conference led by the OPCC in Leicestershire, Melton was promoted as a model of good practice for the use of the DISC app to encourage other county offices to sign up.
- 5.5.11 **Police and Multi-Agency response**
- 5.5.12 Over the last 12 months the Police have also issued 5 Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) to some of our most prolific offenders of retail crime. These orders often stay in place for 3 years and a breach of an order could result in a custodial sentence.
- 5.5.13 In October 2023 Melton town centre experienced an increased level of ASB incidents. As a response, a task group consisting of the Safer Communities team, schools, Melton Learning Hub (MLH), Police and elected Members was quickly set up.
- 5.5.14 The police implemented dispersal orders and work commenced in exploring injunctions for the most prolific offenders. There were also joint patrols with schools, police and MBC to increase a presence within the town.
- 5.5.15 Though the dispersal orders could appear to be a disproportionate response compared to how they would normally respond to such incidents, the police also recognised the significant impact of the incidents as part of their decision to deploy this targeted, short, sharp operation to this sudden state.
- 5.5.16 At a follow up meeting on the 13th November 2023, the group reviewed the actions that had been taken and noted the positive position reached as the ASB level in the town centre had abated.
- 5.5.17 **CCTV**
- 5.5.18 In April 2023 the new CCTV system for Melton town centre went live and has been monitored by Harborough District Council (HDC).
- 5.5.19 We now have a network of 19 cameras, 13 of which are within the town centre, providing us with a wider coverage of the centre.
- 5.5.20 We also introduced 2 Help Points, as part of our commitment to reassure visitors to the town centre, especially for the nighttime economy. It also supports our commitment to reduce violence against women and girls. These are located on Norman Way and Wilton Terrace.
- 5.5.21 In response to some changes in organisational needs, it has been agreed that the Council will transition to an alternative provider for CCTV monitoring and maintenance.
- 5.5.22 An exit and transition process has recently been agreed, meaning that following implementation of a transition to a new provider, Harborough District Council (HDC) will no longer monitor the Council's CCTV system. It has been agreed that HDC will continue to monitor the system until a suitable replacement has been sourced and officers have been exploring options with alternative providers to ensure we receive the best possible service at the best possible price.

5.5.23 As a result of this process, it has been agreed to move CCTV monitoring and maintenance arrangements to West Northampton Council (WNC). We are now in the process of agreeing contracts and arranging a managed transition, though a date has not yet been confirmed. We are currently working with BT to provide the connection between both authorities and are in the process of negotiating the finer details. We hope to have the new provider in place before October 2024.

5.5.24 Additional funding has also been secured via the Safer Melton Partnership of £10,837 to support transition and enhance the CCTV offer for Melton. The money will pay for the brand-new screens and accessories, solely for MBC cameras at the WNC control room, Avigilon licences to ensure our software is operational for the next 5 years, Melton Police station will have brand new screens installed to enable them to have better communication with the CCTV control room and enable them to tackle crimes robustly within our town centre.

5.5.25 **Funding – CSP and Safer Streets 5 (SS5)**

5.5.26 Over the last financial year, the SMP used its budget and SS5 funding to deliver a range of projects intended to help mitigate against ASB and crime:

- a) Additional CCTV at Norman Way, Wilton Terrace and Beckmill Court
- b) Help Points x 2 at Norman Way, Wilton Terrace
- c) Solar lighting at the skate park. This is to make our facilities more accessible to our young people in darker months instead of hanging around in the town centre.
- d) Solar lighting at Wilton Terrace to illuminate an area where local business felt at risk of crime due to the lack of lighting.
- e) Solar lighting at St Mary's Close graveyard.
- f) Streetvibe, a youth diversion organisation that attend Melton town on a Monday and Tuesday between 15:00hrs to 17:00hrs. They have an outreach bus that caters for young people where they can access music gaming and other activities whilst engaging with the workers who will activity try and build relationships.
- g) The Peoples Buddhi, a youth diversion organisation that worked within the 2 secondary schools with some of their challenging students offering an alternative method of learning.

5.5.27 **Case Study**

5.5.28 The Safer Communities team received a report, via the DISC app, concerning an individual that had been shoplifting within one of the SMART members stores. The report had a log of the incident and a photograph they had uploaded. This was extremely helpful for the team, as we were able to identify the offender because of the photograph that was provided through DISC. The offender was known to us, and we were aware they may have been involved in retail crime before. As a result, we issued the offender with a Community Protection Warning excluding them from the SMART member shops, for a period of 6 months.

5.5.29 We have also had reports, via DISC, where the CPW has been breached, and consequently a CPN was issued. As you can see from the figures at 4.6.1, CPWs are an effective deterrent – only 2 individuals breached their CPW and went on to receive a CPN out of the 11 issued.

5.6 **Planned Activity**

- 5.6.1 The SMP remain fully committed to supporting our local retailers and local economy through proactive, targeted and responsive measures as appropriate.
- 5.6.2 Through SS5 we have also secured target hardening items, such as video doorbells and further mini CCTV units. Whilst the video doorbells are intended generally for domestic properties, the SMP have been able to extend the scope and are now able to offer this to our town centre shops to act as a further deterrent.
- 5.6.3 Our CCTV offer will be more robust and proactive, with the new monitoring partnership coming to fruition in the coming weeks. The new monitoring system has the capability to expand wider to accommodate additional cameras and we also have a staggered replacement plan in place to future proof the system and avoid the costly impact of having to replacement the whole system in one go.
- 5.6.4 We will be installing anti-climbing spikes at Wilton Terrace, to prevent youths climbing on the rooftops of businesses causing damage to buildings and distress to staff.
- 5.6.5 **Diversions activities**
- 5.6.6 Streetvibe will continue to work in Melton until the end of March 2025 and will be actively trying to engage with our young people, encouraging them to use their facilities and support our young people.
- 5.6.7 Skatepark accessibility. We have introduced 6 solar lights around the skate park to encourage our young people to access the area in the darker months without feeling unsafe.
- 5.6.8 We have also run a competition, asking for graffiti designs, by our residents, to make the skate park feel more part of their community and give them a sense of ownership.

6 **Options Considered**

- 6.1 This report responds directly to a request arising from a motion to Full Council in December 2023.

7 **Consultation**

- 7.1 On 3rd June 2024, partner organisations that form the Safer Melton Partnership were consulted with on the subject of retail theft and the contents of the report was discussed.
- 7.2 A retail survey was conducted with 15 businesses within the town centre and has provided a snapshot of the current views of our retailers.
 - 7.2.1 All 15 businesses responded to the survey:
 - a) 44% of the businesses stated they experienced frequent incidents of retail crime and ASB.
 - b) 47% of the businesses felt that retail crime has increased over the last 12 months in their store.
 - c) However, 67% of staff stated they felt safe at work, with 93% knowing how to report an incident.
 - d) Over half of the businesses surveyed are now using a reporting tool known as ‘the DISC app’ as a tool to report incident of theft and ASB within their stores.
 - e) Of the businesses using the DISC app, 75% stated they have noticed an increase in enforcement action against the perpetrators and are confident with using the DISC app.

7.2.2 The full results of the survey are attached as **Appendix 2**.

8 Financial Implications

8.1 The activities of the Safer Melton Partnership are supported by external funding, guided by clear priorities and in response to specific crime trends or needs.

8.2 The Safer Melton Partnership has access to an annual budget of £31,335.75 which is used for projects and activities to support the reduction of crime and ASB within the borough. In order to receive the funding, the SMP must submit a bid to the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPPC), and if approved the funds will be released.

8.3 We then must provide quarterly stats to the OPCC to ensure delivery.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate services

9 Legal and Governance Implications

9.1 This report has arisen from a motion to Council. However, as part of its remit, the scrutiny committee is the Council's designated statutory Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and receives an annual update report to assist in the discharge of this responsibility. The next annual report is due in September 2024.

9.2 The Council's obligation to prepare and implement a crime and disorder strategy (referred to at 4.3 above) includes keeping that strategy under review for the purposes of monitoring its effectiveness. Any revisions to that strategy are the joint responsibility of Council and Cabinet. The effectiveness of the measures referred to in this report may also be relevant to any such review.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer

10 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

10.1 This report does not require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) as it is for information only. We will be developing our strategic plan this year and will undertake an EIA as well as full consultation as part of this.

11 Data Protection Implications (Mandatory)

11.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed for the following reasons. This report is for information only and there are no risks/issues to the rights and freedoms of natural persons. The Council should however, continue to consider the extent to which it shares information using the DISC App, seeking advice from the Information Governance Lawyer and/or Monitoring Officer as to its implications. This responsibility continues to apply to the Council notwithstanding the capability of the App itself.

12 Community Safety Implications

12.1 This is a report of behalf of the chair of the Community Safety Partnership (Safer Melton Partnership). It directly addresses matters relating to community safety.

13 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

13.1 The Safer Communities team also have responsibilities around enviro crime and commercial waste. Tackling enviro crime and commercial waste also helps to, etc. improve the environmental impact of ASB such as graffiti, damage to property

14 Other Implications (where significant)

- 14.1 Improved mental health of retailers and residents; Morale of businesses and reduction of losses incurred due to theft and vandalism

15 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Failing to act on planned interventions to address retail crime	Very Low	Critical	6
2	Failure of reporting through correct channels	Significant	Critical	12

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant			2	
	3 Low				
	2 Very Low			1	
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	Robust partnership working through the SMP
2	Increasing and ongoing use of DISC and businesses actively involved in SMART

16 Background Papers

16.1 Council Meeting December 2023: [Agenda item - MOTIONS ON NOTICE - Melton Borough Council](#)

17 Appendices

17.1 Appendix 1 Letter from Council Leader and Deputy Leader

17.2 Appendix 2 Retail Surveys

17.3 Appendix 3 Police Data