

<b>Committee(s):</b> Strategy Planning & Performance Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 26 September 2024
<b>Subject:</b> Deep Dive: How effectively is the City of London Police responding to shoplifting?	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	CoLP impact the following Corp Plan outcomes: Vibrant Thriving Destination- (Community Safety/ CT) Dynamic Economic Growth- (National Lead Force)
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Commissioner of Police	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Ch Supt Amanda Horsburgh, Head of Specialist Ops	

## Summary

This report provides a deep dive into the local and national rise in retail crime, as well as the rise in assaults and abuse aimed at retail workers. It provides an overview of the work being done by the City of London Police to deter and prevent business crimes, while also recognising areas for improvement.

In the City of London, shoplifting incidents have increased significantly from 180 in Q1 2023/24 to 467 in Q1 2024/25, marking a 159% increase year-on-year. The rise in shoplifting is attributed to both an increase in reporting and more engagement with licensed premises.

The City of London Police's (CoLP) attendance policy is to attend all shopliftings where a suspect has been detained or a worker has been threatened or had violence used on them. CoLP's response times to shoplifting incidents are based on the threat, harm and risk assessment:

- a. Immediate Response: within 15 minutes where the immediate presence of a police officer will have a significant impact on the outcome of an incident
- b. Significant Response: within 1 hour for incidents with a degree of importance or urgency associated with the initial police action, but an emergency response is not required.

Overall, CoLP continue to provide a good service level in response to theft incidents, more broadly attending 100% of theft incidents reported via our control room with 97% of all immediate incidents within the 15min timeframe (on average 6min) and

99% of all Significant graded incidents within the 60min timeframe (on average 19min).

CoLP has a dedicated unit for preventing shoplifting, which patrols hotspot areas and engages with retailers to report crimes. There is a focus on hotspot policing and coordination with other agencies to address both daytime and night-time retail crimes.

All shoplifting crimes are allocated to the Volume Crime Unit for investigation. The investigative response is supported by the investment made into CCTV across the Square Mile which support the identification of offenders.

This collective effort and proactive approach enables the City of London Police to consistently deliver high positive outcome for retail crime and sits above national average.

The positive outcome rate for shoplifting has increased from 28% in Q1 2023/24 to 35% in Q1 2024/25, reflecting improved detections and enforcement efforts. CoLP has recently issued three Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) against prolific shoplifters, preventing their return to the City for up to five years.

This report also provides details of the national context in terms of shop theft and contains an overview of the work of the National Business Crime Centre, led by the City of London Police, and its work to tackle retail crime.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to note the report.

### **Main Report**

#### **Background**

2. This report forms a series of deep dives into areas of particular importance or interest for the Strategic Planning and Performance Committee. This deep dive on retail crime forms the first deep dive of the performance year 2024-25.

#### **Local Response**

##### Capacity, Capability & Performance

3. The City of London Police (CoLP) has a proactive approach to managing and preventing shop theft. CoLP has a unit of officers in Local Policing who specifically patrol hotspot repeat locations, and report crimes on retailers' behalf.
4. In the City of London, retail crime and violence linked to retail crime are increasing. This is partly due to engagement with licensed premises and an increase in reporting and intelligence. A multi-agency approach to policing the

night-time economy continues with a focus on hotspot policing. An alert scheme is active for retail premises on Cheapside for shoplifting, due to the link to violent crime when shoplifters assault retail staff/officers. The Tactical Tasking & Coordination Group within the City of London Police has commissioned work to provide a more in-depth analysis of shoplifting and violence for both daytime and night-time hours.

5. CoLP are among the top-performing forces in detections for shop theft, as outlined in the table below:

<b>Force</b>	<b>Total positive Outcomes for Shoplifting offences 23/24</b>	<b>Total Outcomes for Shoplifting Offences 23/24</b>	<b>% of total outcomes achieved that were positive</b>
Norfolk	2,102	4,967	42%
Cumbria	820	2,250	36%
Suffolk	1,263	3,506	36%
Humberside	3,026	9,055	33%
South Yorkshire	4,587	14,342	32%
Gwent	1,132	3,943	29%
Cambridgeshire	1,786	6,267	28%
Lincolnshire	1,693	5,987	28%
North Wales	1,364	4,943	28%
Hampshire	3,928	14,326	27%
West Mercia	2,677	9,775	27%
<b>London, City of</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>1,076</b>	<b>27%</b>
Durham	1,841	7,105	26%
Northamptonshire	1,223	4,729	26%

6. In recent weeks the City of London Police have had three Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) of prolific shoplifters, which states they cannot return to the City for five years. Some examples include:
- a. On 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024, City Officers arrested an individual who was linked to 6 thefts and arrested proactively. When arrested, he already had a Criminal Behaviour Order preventing him being in the City already in place as issued by the Court following a previous sentence issued. He was charged for 6 counts of theft (approx. £1800) and breach of CBO. He is now on remand awaiting sentencing.
  - b. On 12<sup>th</sup> August 2024, City Officers arrested another individual who was linked to three thefts from Reiss, Octagon Mall through CCTV circulations. He was arrested by the Proactive Crime Unit (PACT) at his home address and charged for 3 counts of theft (value over £1700). He was sentenced for 4 weeks per theft (suspended for 12 months). He has since gone to prison having further committed offences within the suspended term.
  - c. On 16<sup>th</sup> August 2024, City Officers arrested another individual, who was spotted by a PACT officer on way to a training course. The suspect was

known to have been wanted for 2 thefts (approx. £380) and assaults on shop staff. He was charged with 2 counts of theft & 1 count of assault. He is currently on remand awaiting sentencing.

7. CoLP's attendance policy for shoplifting incidents is assessed based on threat, harm and risk with an Immediate response (i.e. where the immediate presence of a police officer will have a significant impact on the outcome of an incident, e.g. if the suspect was still there or had just left) within 15 minutes and a Significant response (i.e. incidents with a degree of importance or urgency associated with the initial police action, but an emergency response is not required, e.g. if the suspect was detained but calm and compliant) within 1 hour. CoLP will attend all incidents where a suspect has been detained or a worker has suffered violence or threats.
8. Overall, CoLP continue to provide a good service level in response to theft incidents, more broadly attending 100% of theft incidents reported via our control room with 97% of all immediate incidents within the 15min timeframe (on average 6min) and 99% of all Significant graded incidents within the 60min timeframe (on average 19min).

#### Crime Prevention

9. Last year, CoLP ran Op Rosetto a number of times, which involved working with the City's retail security to raise awareness of retail crime prevention, conducting visits to stores with high incidents of thefts, providing crime prevention advice and shared information on reporting and our response commitment.
10. In addition, our Strategic Threat Assessment guides our Tactical Tasking and Coordination Group, where our Control Strategy is delivered. Retail Crime is reviewed under the 'Threat (Other)' category. A range of operations and initiatives are supported through the TTCG including Op Niven, Op Rosetto and other dedicated crime prevention activity. Additionally, bids have been approved for submission to the Safer City Partnership for partnership support to reduce retail crime through the purchase of prevention kits. This initiative aims to improve security at high crime retail locations, as well as gyms, which are high demand generators of theft crimes.

#### Demand

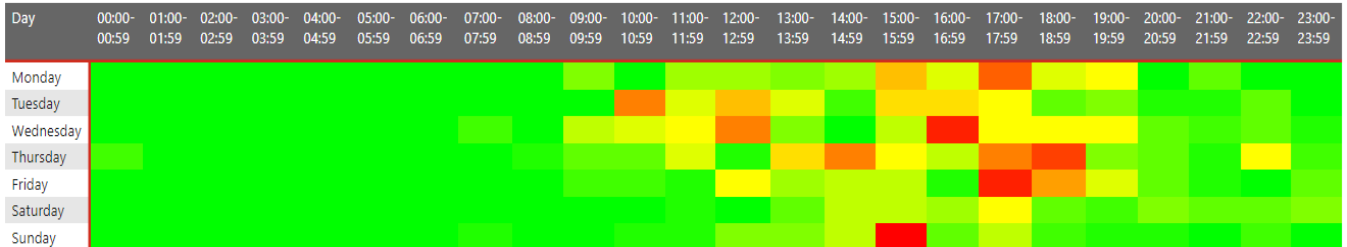
11. Demand data shows that shoplifting crimes are continuing to increase in the City of London year on year. CoLP have seen an increase of 159% shoplifting crimes in Q1 of 2024/25 since Q1 2023/24:

#### *Shoplifting Crimes:*

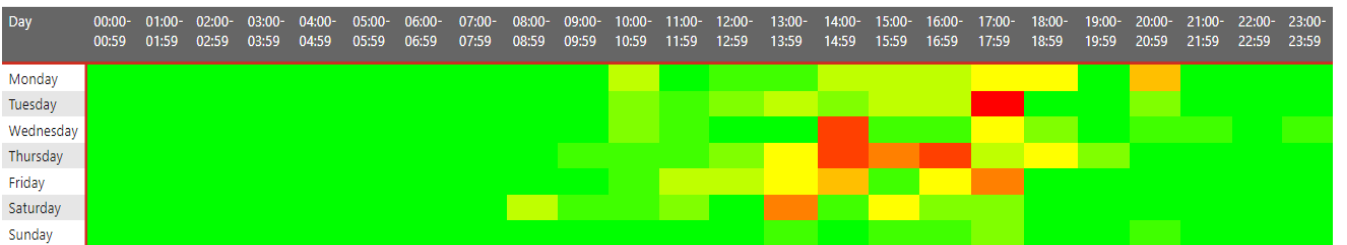
Q1 2023/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25
180	286	319	370	467

12. In addition, monitoring is undertaken to understand the time of day and days of the week when shoplifting offending is most likely to occur. As you can see from the graphic below, most offences occur in the late afternoon to early evening, with a particular high spot on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday afternoons. This has seen a slight shift since Q1 2023/24 where particular high occurrences of crime happened on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

**Q1 2024/25:**



**Q1 2023/24**



**Positive Outcomes**

- 13. CoLP has a dedicated unit for preventing shoplifting, which patrols hotspot areas and engages with retailers to report crimes. There is a focus on hotspot policing and coordination with other agencies to address both daytime and night-time retail crimes.
- 14. All shoplifting crimes are allocated to the Volume Crime Unit for investigation. The investigative response is supported by the investment made into CCTV across the Square Mile which support the identification of offenders.
- 15. This collective effort and proactive approach enables the City of London Police to consistently deliver high positive outcome for retail crime and sits above national average.
- 16. The proportion of crimes that have a positive outcome assigned such as a charge/summons, caution or penalty notice (i.e. positive outcome rate) has improved by 218% (+83) in Q1 2024/25 from Q1 2023/24, as shown in the breakdown below.

Q1 2023/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25
38	92	84	133	121

17. Nationally, 2023/24 saw a 30% increase in shop theft crime compared to 2022/23. The positive outcome rate for shoplifting is 20% in 2023/24 which was

an increase from 11% in 22/23, showing the City of London Police's high performing position.

### National Context

18. Shop theft across the UK is a pervasive issue with significant economic and social implications. It is the most common type of retail crime, and its frequency has been rising in recent years. This surge is driven by a combination of factors, including economic challenges, social inequalities, and the relative ease of committing the crime with minimal immediate consequences.
19. In their 2024 Crime Survey, the British Retail Consortium (BRC) estimated that there were 16.7 million incidents of customer theft with losses at £1.8 billion. The overall cost including crime prevention measures stands at £3.3 billion.
20. Shop theft is committed by a wide range of individuals, from opportunistic thieves to organised crime groups (OCGs). While some incidents involve individuals stealing out of necessity or desperation, there is a growing trend of professional thieves who target high-value items for resale. OCGs, in particular, are known to orchestrate large-scale thefts, often targeting multiple stores across different regions in a coordinated manner.
21. The biggest concern for retailers is the rise in assaults and abuse aimed at shopworkers with the BRC stating that there were just over 1,300 violent or abusive incidents a day. The new Labour government have committed to continue to address the problem through the introduction of a new offence of assault of a shopworker.
22. In response to the rising levels of shop theft and assaults on staff, retailers are investing more in security technologies, such as CCTV, facial recognition, and electronic article surveillance (EAS) systems. Additionally, many are increasing their collaboration with local police, Business Improvement Districts and Business Crime Reduction Partnerships to better tackle the issue.
23. Incidents of police recorded shop theft in 2023 reached 425,000, nationally, a 37% increase on the previous year. Crimes reported in 2024 have increased further still. In response, the National Police Chiefs' Council launched the Retail Crime Action Plan in October 2023, which sets out several expectations for police, in particular around police attendance at incidents where violence has been used or threatened, or where a shoplifter has been detained. The increased focus by police has also seen improvements in police outcomes with more offenders being charged and Criminal Behaviour Orders awarded for the most prolific offenders.
24. The issue of OCGs is being tackled through the introduction of a retailer funded police unit under the name of Pegasus, which sits within Opal (the police acquisitive crime intelligence unit). Officially launched in May 2024, the team has already had a positive effect with a number of OCGs being disrupted and brought to justice through the intelligence collated by the team.

## History of the NBCC

25. The National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) was launched in October 2017 with a £1m, 3-year Home Office Transformation Grant. Originally hosted by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) ownership moved across to CoLP in 2019 where it remains under the leadership of AC Paul Betts, who acts as Senior Sponsor for the NBCC. Given the existence of the Acquisitive Crime Portfolio and Retail Crime Portfolio, there is an ongoing review of the NPCC portfolios to define ownership and improve efficiency.

26. Since the end of the Home Office grant, the finances and staffing of the NBCC has been covered by CoLP and the MPS, with CoLP running the NBCC as a national function. This approach is neither appropriate nor sustainable in the long term.

### Current establishment

- Superintendent Patrick Holdaway (lead) – funded by CoLP.
- Inspector – as of mid-March 24 this post is vacant, however a replacement is sought to fill the seconded post which is funded by the MPS until June 2025.

## Role and purpose

27. Using the enablers of Partnership, Intelligence and Prevention the NBCC works to prevent and combat business crime by working closely with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), law enforcement agencies, the Home Office, businesses, and other stakeholders. The NBCC does this by raising awareness of threats and abuse against employees; highlighting the risks of business crime; promoting good governance; providing training and support to help businesses and organisations identify and report crime and intelligence; and, designing effective pursue strategies targeting organised crime and prolific offenders.

## Information and awareness

28. In 2021, a new website was created - [www.nbcc.police.uk](http://www.nbcc.police.uk) - which hosts a wide range of NBCC designed guidance, including over 30 bespoke crime prevention guides as well as training e.g. videos of how to report crime, protect staff, and prevent violence. The website also hosts Trading Standards supported training and guidance on the storage and selling of knives for retailers, and the ShopSafe awareness campaign products.

29. In addition, the NBCC has published a monthly newsletter providing guidance and advice as well as updates on NBCC activity. Issue number 16 has recently been released which can be accessed at: <https://nbcc.police.uk/news/newsletters>

30. The NBCC has a strong social media presence on LinkedIn and X, with dedicated profiles reaching 1000s of followers. The channels are used to highlight workstreams and raise the profile of the guidance available.
31. The NBCC have developed and maintained a network of police contacts across all forces which are supported by regular awareness and engagement events to update on current trends, highlighting and sharing best practice.
32. In the last 12 months the NBCC has given over 50 presentations to police and business groups.

### **Action Driven**

33. The NBCC has developed the Safer Business Action Days model: Safer Business Action (SaBA) Days is a joint approach by police, business, private security, Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs) and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) working in partnership to focus resources into a designated location to create a significant impact to reduce crime.
34. This model is now used extensively by police forces and retailers to deliver local action. This model has been supported by the recent introduction of Safer Action Business Nights, which focusses on the night time economy.
35. The NBCC has initiated, planned and led the NPCC national week of action targeting business crime event have taken place in October 2022, 2023 and planning is in place for 2024
36. In addition, the NBCC has initiated and led the Safer Business Action Month in March 2024. The national initiative saw in excess of 397 days of action take place across 40 forces, it involved over 2700 police officers and staff and saw almost 440 arrests and thousands of positive engagements take place with businesses.
37. To augment the national agenda to prevent Violence Against Woman and Girls (VAWG) the NBCC has developed and introduced a national safe spaces scheme which now includes 10 large national retailers providing over 13,000 safe space locations. In the last few weeks this has been extended to private security where some of the country's largest providers of private security have agreed to support which will see tens of thousands of security officers trained. The scheme will also soon be extended to shopping centres and Business Improvement Districts.
38. Moreover, the NBCC has delivered national information sharing agreements for police engagement with the Security Industry Authority and business groups (NBCS), providing a safe and efficient way for information on prolific offenders to be shared to protect businesses.



39. The NBCC has been recognised in Hansard for its part in the development of the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Bill.

### **Business resilience**

40. The NBCC played a critical role forming the core of the Police Food and Retail Liaison Team under Op Talla, which was the policing response to Covid-19. The team represented UK policing and engaged with retailers and business groups, developed appropriate guidance on operational protocols to keep customers and staff safe, as well as bespoke guidance to the tourism and hospitality sector on safe reopening. This engagement influenced legislation, reduced the demand on policing and provided high levels of confidence to the industries and consumers.

41. The NBCC was the conduit for the national escalation on the attacks on 5G masts, the scale and threat of which came to the attention of No.10. The NBCC then assisted the National Crime Agency in the policing response.

42. The NBCC has also provided police support with business engagement Op London Bridge, the funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth. The structured feedback provided by the NBCC influenced changes with business engagement by the MPS for Golden Orb, the Coronation of King Charles III.

43. In addition, the NBCC has provided guidance to businesses on behalf of the NPCC and OP Tarlac, the policing response to recent events in the Middle East.

### **Support of NPCC & APCC portfolios**

44. The NBCC plays a critical role in supporting the following boards:

- a. APCC Business Crime board – chair PCC Katy Bourne OBE
- b. NPCC Acquisitive Crime Threat group – CC Amanda Blakeman KPM
- c. NPCC Commercial Robbery Group – DCC Jayne Meir
- d. Supports DCC Alistair Sutherland with his NPCC private security portfolio and represents policing on the Security Skills board, which is a cross sector group to professionalise the private security sector.

### **National leadership**

45. As core members of the National Retail Crime Steering Group the NBCC has led on a number of task and finish groups e.g. information sharing, reporting etc.

46. It has played a key role in the development of the Retail Crime Action Plan and subsequent national audit to assess its implementation. Results of this have been presented to the Policing Minister.

47. The NBCC has carried out a national survey with businesses on ASB, the results of which were fed into the Home Office ASB Action Plan.

48. The NBCC represents policing through its support of numerous partnerships and governance boards covering a range of sectors.

## **Academia**

49. The NBCC have commissioned an academic report around the accreditation of Business Crime Reduction Partnerships, then introduced a Standards Board to implement the recommendations. The board has reviewed the accreditation standards, training notes and new branding with a launch of the new accreditation scheme planned for summer 2024.
50. In addition the NBCC have commissioned an academic review into crimes that involve tobacco and how the HMRC owned tobacco track and trace initiative can be used to identify stolen product and prevent thefts with a systematic approach.

## **Current focus**

51. Current focus for the NBCC includes:
- a. Supporting the continuing implementation of the Retail Crime Action plan:
    - Police retail crime audit – police performance
    - Greater use of CCTV evidence & use of DEMS by retailers
    - Management of offenders – tagging, court outcomes and & CBOs
    - Development of CPS/Police supported standardised reports & statements
  - b. Continued expansion of Op Portum, the safe spaces scheme.
  - c. Finalising the BCRP Accreditation Scheme for a summer launch.
  - d. Review and next steps of the academic study on crimes involving tobacco.

## **Formal recognition**

- 2020 Fraud Awards: Best Retailer and Policing Collaboration Award – High Commended – Pharmacy Covid Support
- 2021 Fraud Awards:– Winner – Hall of Fame Award
- 2022 NPCC Op Talla National Awards – Commendation – Police Food, Retail Liaison Team
- 2022 Fraud Awards: Best Retailer and Policing Collaboration Award – Highly Commended – SaBA Days
- 2022 Fraud Awards: Best Collaborative Retail Risk Management Solution – Highly Commended – NBCS/Police ISA
- 2022 National Courier Awards Institute of Couriers: ERII Merit Award – OP London Bridge
- 2023 OSPAs: Outstanding Security Partnership – Winner – SaBA Days
- 2023 BSIA Awards: Finalist Partnership award – SaBA Days

## **Conclusion**

52. Shop theft is the most common type of retail crime, and its frequency has been rising in recent years. With this rise, there has also been a rise in assaults and abuse aimed at shopworkers - to which the new government have committed to address through the introduction of a new offence 'assault of a shopworker'.

53. Locally, the City of London Police have also seen a surge in shoplifting, with 467 reported in Q1 24/25 compared to 180 in Q1 23/24. Despite this increase, CoLP continue to provide a good service level in response to incidents, attending 100% reported via our control room. There has also been a 218% (+83) increase in positive outcomes from Q1 23/24 - Q1 24/25.

54. With the increase in business crime, the National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) plays a vital role in preventing and combatting business crime. The NBCC's staffing and finance is covered by CoLP and the MPS, with CoLP heading the NBCC as a national function. This is neither appropriate nor sustainable in the long term, and another approach should be explored.

**Chief Superintendent Amanda Horsburgh**  
Specialist Operations, City of London Police