



TOWN CENTRE BID

CRIME & SAFETY NEWS JUNE 2026

Community Safety Partnership latest

Watford Town Centre BID is a long-established member of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Watford's CSP is a multi-agency organisation that is tasked with prevention of anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder and is there to promote community safety across the whole of the borough. The partnership is a statutory responsibility for the local authority to coordinate.

Central to the day to day working of the partnership is an annual plan which is drawn up based

on the previous year's crime statistics. The statistics give a clear direction of travel for different crime types and allow the partnership to choose its priorities for the coming year.

In this newsletter, we delve into anti-crime and community safety initiatives and provide pertinent information to support Watford Town Centre businesses in reducing local crime.



HARLEQUIN
WATFORD

KEEP IN TOUCH

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WBAC information & process



Always book on to the Watford Town Centre CCTV control room when you open to ensure that your radio equipment is capable of both transmitting and receiving messages.

“CCTV [store name logging on] signing on, can I have a radio check please?”

Wait for reply, then confirm:
“Thank you, also received.”

To transmit a message for assistance or information hold down the talk button, wait a couple of seconds then speak clearly into the mouthpiece. Listen to the radio for any return communications.

Radio procedure guidelines:

- State what business you are
- Be accurate with your information stating description of suspect, sex, nationality, colour, age, physique, skin, hair, outfit, and direction of travel
- Keep your message short and include what has been taken and what way they are heading
- Set your radio to an appropriate volume level. Log off when you finish your shift

Remember, the radio is there for your assistance. Take some time to ensure staff know how to use it. If you need any help, contact **John Hattingh** on **07732 009438** or john.hattingh@herts.police.uk

“I always carry the shop link radio with me when I am on patrol, it is a useful tool to communicate between the police and Watford Town Centre Businesses to report any ASB when in the town.

The radio works well to deter crime and leads to arrests; a great example of this was displayed when Apple in Atria Watford had roughly £3,500 worth of goods stolen. This was all recovered which would not have happened without the aid of the WBAC radio.”

Steven Shaw
Supervisor PCSO

IMPORTANT

When your radio is in the charging unit make sure it is turned off otherwise it will burn out the battery.

Do not leave the radio continuously in the unit.



Crime & incident data

↓ -52%
robbery

↓ -32%
vehicle theft

↓ -10%
sexual offences

↓ -4%
shoplifting

↑ +4%
anti-social
behaviour

↑ +10%
bicycle theft

↑ +4%
violent crime

An analysis of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Watford between 1 April 2025 and 1 April 2026 highlights a number of emerging trends when compared with the previous year.

Overall, reported ASB has increased by 4%, marking a slight rise following a sustained period of decline. Theft of pedal cycles has also risen by 10%, while violent crime has increased by 4%.

Encouragingly, several key crime categories have seen notable reductions. Robbery has decreased significantly by 52%, vehicle crime has fallen by 32%, sexual offences have reduced by 10%, and knife crime is down by 14%. Shoplifting offences have also seen a modest reduction of 4%.

Policing activity within Watford Town Centre has remained proactive and targeted, with a number of operational initiatives designed to prevent crime and enhance public safety:

- **Project Vigilant** continues to operate within the night-time economy. This initiative deploys specially trained plain-clothes officers to identify and disrupt predatory behaviour, intervening at an early stage to prevent serious sexual offences from occurring.
- **Operation Sceptre**, a national campaign focused on reducing knife crime, has recently been conducted in the town centre. This has resulted in multiple arrests for possession of offensive weapons. In addition, test purchase operations have

been carried out at retail premises to ensure compliance with legislation relating to the sale of bladed articles to persons under 18.

- **Operation Hotspot**, a Government-funded initiative, has been further expanded. This provides increased high-visibility policing patrols in areas and at times identified as having a higher risk of crime and ASB, offering both reassurance and a strong deterrent presence.

Alongside enforcement activity, clear local policing priorities have been established to address issues of concern to businesses and the wider community. These include:

- Tackling drug dealing and the associated criminality and anti-social behaviour
- Addressing the illegal use of e-scooters and e-bikes within the town centre
- Reducing incidents of begging and vagrancy along the High Street

We remain committed to working in partnership with local businesses and stakeholders to ensure Watford Town Centre continues to be a safe and welcoming environment for residents, visitors, and the business community alike.

Inspector Simon Cooper
Neighbourhood Policing Team

Q & A Panel Members

Kara Mesiano, Watford Town Centre BID

Inspector Dan Jones, Watford Neighbourhood Policing Team

Zoe Brunt, Watford Borough Council

Paul Yule, Atria Watford



‘Safer After Dark’ campaign

Following the success of our ‘Safer After Dark’ event in December 2025, Watford Town Centre BID is pleased to announce that the campaign will return later this year.

Delivered in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary and Watford Borough Council, the event helped more than 350 women and girls access practical safety resources, including personal alarms, anti-spiking kits and information on initiatives such as Ask for Angela, Ask for Clive and the Hollie Guard app.

The positive feedback received highlighted the importance of providing tangible tools and advice to help women feel safer when working, visiting or enjoying Watford’s evening economy.

Building on this success, Watford Town Centre BID has already ordered 600 additional personal alarms which will be distributed free of charge to female employees working in the town centre during the Autumn/Winter period. This initiative forms part of our ongoing commitment to supporting businesses, improving safety and ensuring that Watford remains a welcoming and inclusive destination after dark.



Live Facial Recognition

Live Facial Recognition Deployment Delivers Positive Results in Watford Town Centre.

A recent deployment of Live Facial Recognition (LFR) technology in Watford Town Centre has been hailed as a success, helping Hertfordshire Constabulary identify and arrest wanted offenders while supporting efforts to keep the town centre safe for businesses, employees and visitors.

The operation took place on Watford High Street and utilised specialist cameras linked to a police watchlist of individuals wanted in connection with criminal offences or those subject to court orders. The technology compares live camera footage against this watchlist in real time, alerting officers when a potential match is identified.

During the deployment, more than 56,000 faces were scanned, resulting in multiple arrests and demonstrating the value of technology led policing in busy town centre environments. Officers arrested individuals wanted for offences including theft, fraud, shoplifting and immigration-related offences. The operation also helped officers identify suspicious behaviour, leading to further arrests.

Importantly, Hertfordshire Constabulary reported that there were no false alerts during the deployment. Any images that do not generate a match are automatically and immediately deleted, while alerts are reviewed by specially trained officers before any action is taken.





Stay safe with the Hollie Guard app

Strict safeguards and oversight are in place to ensure the technology is used lawfully, proportionately and transparently.

Chief Inspector Chris Rutter described the deployment as “very successful”, highlighting how the technology helped officers locate wanted individuals and contributed to making the town centre a safer environment for everyone. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, Jonathan Ash-Edwards, also welcomed the results, describing LFR as a powerful tool that can be used responsibly to catch criminals and prevent further harm.

For businesses operating in Watford Town Centre, initiatives such as Live Facial Recognition provide an additional layer of support to ongoing crime prevention and community safety efforts. By helping police identify offenders quickly and efficiently, the technology contributes to creating a safer, more welcoming environment for shoppers, workers and visitors alike.

John Hattingh, Watford Business Against Crime Coordinator, said: ***“Safety remains a top priority for Watford Town Centre BID. We are pleased to see this operation deliver tangible results, demonstrating how effective collaboration between partners can help reduce crime and support our business community.”***

For more information about Hertfordshire Constabulary’s use of Live Facial Recognition technology, including details on privacy safeguards and future deployments, visit the Hertfordshire Constabulary website, www.herts.police.uk

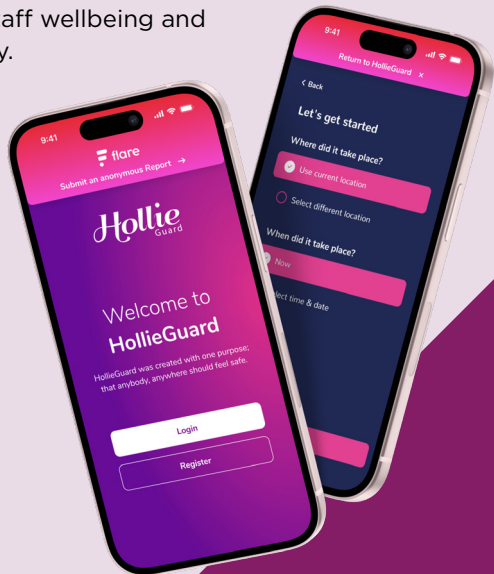
As part of our ongoing commitment to improving safety across Watford Town Centre, we are encouraging businesses and employees to download the Hollie Guard app – a free personal safety app designed to provide reassurance and support when travelling to and from work.

The app allows users to quickly alert chosen emergency contacts if they feel unsafe. Features include location tracking, journey monitoring and a discreet emergency alert function that can be activated if assistance is needed. In an emergency, the app can send the user’s location and audio recordings directly to nominated contacts, helping them respond quickly and effectively.

Hollie Guard is free to download on both Apple and Android devices and has become a valuable tool for many people who regularly commute or work in the evening and night-time economy.

Watford Town Centre BID has been promoting the app through initiatives such as the Safer After Dark campaign, helping employees access practical safety resources and advice. We encourage all businesses to share information about the app with their teams as part of their wider approach to staff wellbeing and personal safety.

For more information and to download the app, scan the QR code.



Harlequin security procedures

As we move through 2026, the centre security team are dedicated to collaborative working with our tenants and external stakeholders. We continue to work closely with Herts Police, Watford Borough Council and Watford Town Centre BID locally and we have now extended this to the wider community and are active members of the Hertfordshire Against Retail Crime Partnership.

We continue to upskill the front-line teams with additional training, this training includes Mental Health & Suicide first aid. With these new skills the Security teams are suitably equipped to support the centres visitors and tenants.

The centre's security teams primary focus remains on continuing to patrol the common areas, with a focus on high visibility patrolling and CCTV monitoring. Whilst you may not see the security all the time, they are covering a carefully managed patrol system which includes checking back of house areas and external areas of the building.

How to contact the shopping centre:

If you are part of the WBAC scheme you can **contact the control room via the radio** (please state which store you are calling from) this is the fastest way to make contact, alternatively you can contact the control room on **01923 250 292 OPT 5**.

Harlequin's Security Priorities for 2026:

- Collaborative working - continue the partnership working with Watford Borough Council, Herts Police, Watford Town Centre BID, One YMCA, New Hope trust
- Continuing to train and develop the onsite security team so they have the skills to support our tenants
- Invest in the most up to date technology to manage and maintain the safety of all visitors
- Reporting crime
- Engagement with tenants and members of the Public

If you have any feedback regarding the Harlequin's Security team, please contact Paul.Yule@savillspm.co.uk

50 Clarendon Road

Due to a history of ASB at 50 Clarendon Road over the past 18 months or so, Police sought funding from the PCC and secured the use of security pods in the site. These are monitored by a control room in Scotland. They are CCTV equipped and have alarms to deter people who enter the site. The site itself is secured and access inside the building is extremely difficult, but as you can understand,

not impossible. Officers will respond if persons are located within the site and deal with them appropriately.

Whilst the long-term plans for the site are still under review, Police will continue to patrol and respond to any Anti-Social Behaviour linked to the premises.



Martyn's Law

National Counter Terrorism Security Office has shared the following information:

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is inviting all those expected to be within scope of Martyn's Law - the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 - or with an interest in it to review and comment on the SIA's draft guidance. The guidance explains how the SIA plans to carry out its role as the regulator.

To support this consultation on the draft guidance, the SIA is hosting a series of webinars to talk through the draft and share the key questions it would like your views on.

This consultation is an important opportunity for organisations to understand how the SIA intends to regulate when Martyn's Law comes into force - expected to be in Spring 2027.



You can sign up to a webinar here.

Strengthening our WBAC network

To support the reduction of retail crime across Watford Town Centre, the Watford Business Against Crime (WBAC) scheme has provided free town centre radios to both Watford High Street Station and Watford Junction Station.

This will strengthen communication between businesses, transport partners and security teams, enabling faster information sharing and a more coordinated response to incidents.

We remain committed to supporting town centre businesses and investing in initiatives that help create a safer environment for everyone.





Help us to help you

We understand how difficult it is for local businesses to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour. Your local police team will do all they can along with the Watford Town Centre Community Safety Partnership to provide you with a timely and effective response – but they need your help.

1. Reporting crimes

- If someone is in danger or a crime is in progress – dial ‘999’
- For all other, non-emergency calls – call police on ‘101’
- If you are reporting a crime, you can do so via this website: www.herts.police.uk
- You can also access their “web chat” and talk to a communications operator via www.herts.police.uk
- This will be recorded and you will be provided with a crime reference number accordingly

2. Information to speed up your report

- Name of your business and all contact details including email address
- Who saw what happened – name/contact number/email for those involved
- Any property stolen? The value of this and any unique markings/identifications. Who is responsible? How do you know them?
- CCTV – you will be sent a link to upload your CCTV footage digitally. Please have your CCTV retrieved and stored locally. If it needs to be obtained from your head office or partner business, have this ready for when officers contact. If officers have to spend time trying to obtain CCTV on your behalf, this can slow down the criminal justice process unnecessarily

3. Echo community voice platform

Tell us what matters most to you

The Watford police community voice and feedback platform is called ‘Echo’. It allows you to voice your opinions about policing in your local area, in your own words and in your own time.

You don’t need to sign up or give any personal information – all your feedback is completely anonymous.

Your comments will be sent to your local Safer Neighbourhood Team officers, who will review them and use them to help build patrol plans,

events and local activity. Whether you live, work or study in Hertfordshire, they want to hear from you. Your views will help shape their local policing priorities, initiatives and campaigns.



Send your feedback

You can send your comments at any time, on either a smartphone, tablet or computer. All you have to do is click on your local area police team’s link, type your comments into the box and press submit.