



TOWN CENTRE BID

Crime & Safety News

May 2024

What is the Community Safety Partnership?



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

Overall, across the borough both crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) have fallen. A noticeable change in the past couple of years has been the reduction of serious violent crime, including sexual offences, stalking and harassment, violence against women, and domestic abuse offences.

However, there has been an upturn in "acquisitive crime", which is when someone benefits from the taking of property from another, this includes burglary, theft of motor vehicles, robbery and shop theft. Burglary and car crime have seen reductions, but shop theft and robbery are up. The partnership has prioritised these rising acquisitive crime types as the ones to tackle in the coming year.

"The Perfume Shop has recently had a number of crimes and we have been very happy with the response from the police and the results."

Lucy
The Perfume Shop Manager





New police station

In December 2023, Watford Police formally opened the doors to their new police station at 3 George Street, Watford, WD18 0BX, replacing the site at Shady Lane.

The station is home to Response and Neighbourhood Policing Teams, a Local Crime Unit, Community Safety Unit and the force-wide Operational Support Group and Children & Young People team. There is a front counter facility and interview rooms available.

CPW, CPN & CBO information

To deal specifically with thefts from shops and ASB in Watford Town Centre, the partnership formed a task group. The group found that the key driver for shop theft were a smaller group of very well-known persons who were using shop theft to finance their complex needs. Subsequently, support groups that understand complex and housing needs have joined the task group.

The group drew up a list of the most frequent repeat offenders and implemented a strategy to consistently monitor these persons and warn them that they were now being formally targeted for intervention if they did not desist in their activities.

The first stage of the intervention process is a **Community Protection Warning (CPW)**, which sets out what course of action the individual must now engage in i.e. not to enter certain shops or areas within the town. This is shared with the BID, Atria security and the individual's support services reinforce the warning and allow tracking of that individual.

If this warning is breached, there is an escalation to a formal notice called a **Community Protection Notice (CPN)**. If further breaches are committed, then the Police can apply to the courts that the person receives a **Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO)** upon conviction of the offence; this order can make it an arrestable offence to be in Watford Town Centre if that's what the order sets out.

From these interventions, we have seen a notable reduction in those under such interventions from further shop thefts. Since Autumn 2023, Watford Police have issued **over 30** Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) and Notices (CPNs) to individuals believed to be contributing to crime and anti-social behaviour in Watford Town Centre. A number of individuals have been arrested and dealt with by the courts. This included imprisonment for a small number, identified by the task group, who persisted in criminal activities.

Watford Police understand the impact such behaviour can have on local businesses and will work with you and partners to prevent and deter such behaviour. Evidence in the form of CCTV and business impact statements can support the applications they make.

"I feel the response from the police recently has been really good - after reporting incidents and crimes, convictions have followed. I feel Watford Town Centre bans are working and there is certainly less theft from here recently."

Ismail

Marks & Spencer's Store Protection Officer, high street entrance

WBAC information & process

Watford Business Against Crime (WBAC) is a membership scheme, run by Watford Town Centre BID, which aims to reduce retail crime and anti-social behaviour throughout the town.

Benefits of joining:

- Exclusive access to intelligence about, and photos of convicted retail crime and fraud offenders.
- Participation in the WBAC Exclusion Order Scheme which sees persistent shop thieves banned from all member stores.
- Links to Hertfordshire Police through nominated PCSOs and police officers who work in Watford Town Centre.
- Monthly meetings to share intelligence.
- Free signage, stickers and crime prevention material.

Email enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com for more information about joining the WBAC membership scheme, rates are reduced for Watford Town Centre BID businesses.

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



“Joining the Watford Business Against Crime scheme has been useful in reducing theft from our High Street store.

We're able to identify and deter potential offenders from the descriptions and direction of travel provided over the radio and the Watford Town Centre CCTV team always responds. The WBAC coordinator, John regularly visits to offer advice and support and there are monthly meetings providing valuable updates on Watford Town Centre's most prolific offenders.

I highly recommend joining the Watford Business Against Crime scheme.”

Davendra Savers

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.





Atria security procedures

Paul Yule, Atria Watford Shopping Centre's Duty Manager:

"Atria security provide security for the common parts only and, whilst a deterrent, will sadly not stop shop theft by them being outside the store, regardless of the number. We also must balance the need of our other tenants and therefore the centre is split into zones which has security appointed to the areas (as well as cleaners all in uniform).

Whilst you may not see security all the time, they are there covering a carefully managed beat patrol (but also have to ensure core checks and back of house areas are covered), and over 500 CCTV cameras that are being monitored 24 hours a day.

If a theft is in progress and you wish to conduct a stop, the store should call our control room on the WBAC radio or on 01923 250 292 OPT 5, we will send security to assist the store in conducting a stop outside the store, but we cannot do it (legally) for you. You should also crime the situation yourselves on 101 (or 999 if you feel it is correct to do so).

If a theft has occurred in store without knowledge until after the event, the store should report this to either a security officer or to our control room so a report can be made. Again, you should always crime the theft on 101.

Please be assured that we will do all we can to offer the best advice but unfortunately, our powers under SIA do not match those of the police, also "professional criminals" will in the main be deterred by store systems and visible store presence."

Atria statistics Jan-March 2023 vs Jan-March 2024

22%
reduction in reported security related incidents

60%
reduction in anti-social behaviour reports

20%
increase in reported shoplifts

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 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 our 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.

Crime & ASB stats

"Crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Watford Town Centre has fallen."

PCSO Steven Shaw



-4%

fall in recorded crime
from April 2023 to March 2024



-4%

fall in anti-social behaviour
from April 2023 to March 2024



+4%

increase in response times to emergency incidents within 15 minutes
from December 2023 to March 2024



94.6%

of emergency incidents responded to within 15 minutes from December 2023 to March 2024



-20%

reduction in bicycle theft
compared to last year

"The prolific shoplifters don't seem to be as prevalent recently. Also, there's great communication on the shop link radios as people are helping each other in tackling the shoplifting."

Anthony

Marks & Spencer's
Store Host, Atria
internal entrance



Watford Town Centre Partnership priorities May - August 2024

Watford Police – A focus on community well-being, which includes the tackling of any issue that presents an increased or emerging risk. ‘Reassure and inform’ is another area of focus, which is the communication strategy for all the work being done ensuring that the town’s stakeholders are kept informed on the work being done. The prevention of acquisitive crime is also a big priority, as set out in the introduction of this newsletter.

Areas of focus:

1. Drug dealing and youth-related anti-social behaviour on Rickmansworth Rd (from Cassiobury Park to the Town Hall roundabout):



2. Street drinking in and around St Mary’s church yard, Church car park and St Marys Road (PSPO area):



Watford Town Centre BID – A renewed focus on providing Business Impact Statements to support Watford Police with CPW, CPN and CBO applications to court to prevent prolific offenders from entering the town.

Atria – An additional 10 cameras have been installed in key areas, such as TGI walkway, Beechen Grove bus lane and Queens Road. Atria have also invested in loitering cameras in all their car parks as well as updating the CCTV in these areas.

Community Safety Partnership Seminar

Wednesday 3 July 2024
10:00am - 11:30am
 Cineworld, Charter Place, Atria Shopping Centre

- Meet the Community Safety Partnership Members
- Receive updated information on the Partnership achievements
- The latest data and statistics for Watford Town Centre
- Q&A panel

Please RSVP to enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com