

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience

Questions to the Police

Do you think crime has an affect on footfall to the town centre?

Unfortunately, without specific details regarding footfall to the town centre it is not possible to ascertain whether crime has an effect.

It is however thought that crime does not affect footfall, with the possible exception of any high profile cases of crime which may cause short term concerns.

The environment in which someone is looking to shop is more likely to affect footfall. The places to park, the cleanliness, the availability of a selection of shops will affect whether someone decides to visit the town centre or to shop elsewhere.

Antisocial behaviour, perceived or otherwise, such as young people 'hanging about', incivilities, drinking in the street and environmental crime provide for an unwelcoming environment.

What do you think the Council could do, in terms of safety, to make the town centre more appealing to visitors?

Resources should be invested in ensuring the cleanliness of the town; reducing the signs of spiral of decline and broken window syndrome.

By ensuring general cleanliness is maintained, broken pavements mended, streets cleaned of rubbish and graffiti, chewing gum removed, soft landscaping maintained visitors will be presented with a positive impression of Northampton town, and shown an environment where they will want to visit and shop. When left unaddressed all those maintenance tasks collectively present an uncared for town, and can create an environment for misuse and anti-social behaviour to flourish.

An increase uniformed presence should be encouraged by partners, alongside the use of powers of partners in seizure of alcohol.

Continue with partnership campaigns such as the 'kill with kindness campaign' promoting the support of charities to help break the cycle of homelessness.

Retailers need to be encouraged into the town, potentially through grants or reduced rates. For those empty retail outlets to be presented in a manor which look occupied / cared for.

Do you think anti social behaviour caused by drinking and begging has an affect on footfall and how many prosecutions have there been in the past 12 months?

Again without specific details relating to footfall to the town centre it is not possible to answer as no correlation between ASB and footfall can be drawn.

However, in the absence of any data it is felt that ASB may have an impact on whether persons will visit the town centre. It is believed that street drinking and begging may impact on visitors who would rather shop in what they consider to be a safe environment. What is important to note however, ASB is not solely due to drinking or begging and may be shown in other forms which could equally impact on whether a person chooses to visit the town.

In terms of the data requested, the information provided relates to arrests for Drunk and Disorderly and arrests for Begging/Vagrancy. Unfortunately arrest data is recorded against the custody station to which the arrested person is taken and not where the arrest was made.

In 2011 there were 497 arrests countywide for Drunk and Disorderly (207 of whom were taken to Campbell Square or Weston Favell) and 19 arrests for Begging/Vagrancy (11 of who were taken to Campbell Square or Weston Favell). This compares to 438 arrests for Drunk and Disorderly (164 of whom were taken to Campbell Square or Weston Favell and a further 6 to the Criminal Justice Centre, Brackmills) and 34 arrests for Begging/Vagrancy in 2012 (10 of whom were taken to Campbell Square or Weston Favell and a further 6 to the Criminal Justice Centre, Brackmills).

The levels of ASB for the Northampton Central Area shows the number of recorded ASB incidents for begging/ vagrancy has risen from 52 in 2011 to 61 in 2012. In 2011 there were 37 incidents of street drinking, however these figures cannot be compared as street drinking ceased to be a specific type of ASB in 2011.

In addition between July and November 2012 there were 447 seizures of alcohol undertaken within the Central Sector (relating to police data only).