

Motion for Time Limited Debate – Shoplifting in Kent

Proposer: Mr Chris Passmore

Seconder: Mr Richard Streatfeild

Background – Provided by the Liberal Democrat Group

Rates of shoplifting in Kent and across the UK have significantly risen, causing distress and financial strain on businesses. Figures from the Home Office show there was a 22 per cent increase in shoplifting in 2022, with the number of offences rising from 256,000 to 314,000. Data from the Office for National Statistics shows a significant increase in shoplifting in the South East, with Kent experiencing a 17% increase in the year up to March 2023.

Using data from Police UK, Kent Live has constructed an interactive map showing the high streets and shopping precincts of Kent most likely to be impacted by shoplifting in Kent. The data shows that Stone and Crossways in Dartford was most affected with 883 crimes recorded – a 57 per cent increase on the previous year. This was followed by Ringlestone and Central Maidstone (435 crimes) and Sittingbourne Central and Milton Regis in Swale (360 crimes) – some of these being Kent's busiest shopping areas.

Additionally, the data has been used to show a comparison of the number of stores in each area and the rate of theft per 10 shops. The Canterbury Barracks neighbourhood suffers from the most shoplifting with 182 crimes reported – equivalent to 60.7 shoplifting offences for every 10 shops. Other hotspots include Sheerness East in Swale with 49.8 crimes per 10 shops, and Borden and The Meads also in Swale with 43.3 crimes per shop.

Many believe shoplifting is a victimless crime, this is not the case. Shoplifting is highly costly for communities, businesses, and the economy. Business owners face increased financial pressures, as well as inconvenience and loss of stock. Moreover, small business owners are citing the impact on their physical and emotional health. Across the UK, more than 80,000 cases of theft from shops come before the courts and the public faces increased costs as a result. Research shows that some smaller businesses are forced to raise prices by up to 10% to cover the costs of shoplifting.

Motion:

- a. This council acknowledges increasing levels of shoplifting in Kent and the financial, emotional and health impacts this may have on business owners and employees.
- b. To recommend to the Executive that:
 - i. The Leader writes to the relevant agencies to ascertain the full extent of shoplifting in Kent, and its impact on businesses and employees.
 - ii. They consult with the Kent Community Safety Partnership to determine how best KCC could assist in signposting advice and guidance for business through the authority's communication channels.
- c. to recommend that the Kent & Medway Police and Crime Panel seeks further assurance from the Police and Crime Commissioner on the Police response to the issue of shoplifting.