

Appendix 3 – Summary of responses from key partners.

Coventry City Council

My Name is Simon Hutt and I am employed by Coventry City Council as a Street Enforcement Manager. I am responsible for managing the enforcement officers that patrol the City Centre and, along with West Midlands Police, we manage the operation of the City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) that came into effect in July 2017.

The Council is committed to making the City Centre a destination that citizens and visitors wish to visit, that businesses wish to be located in and is a safe location for those to live and work in.

Prior to the granting of the current order in 2017 the role of our enforcement officers was solely around basic issues such as littering and similar and on occasion where some low level nuisance was occurring, they were limited as to what they could practically do, they could only offer words of advice and if people ignored this, not much more could be done.

Because of the limited powers of officers they would often have to rely upon Police officers to take effective action, however because of often limited Police resources, the relatively low level nature of what we were reporting meant that often no officers would attend and people would effectively get away with their actions.

This often caused frustration with my officers themselves but also members of the public often viewed them as ineffective as they could see their limitations.

Upon the order being granted in 2017, the powers my officers had were clearly defined, and enforcement options clarified and this enabled us to target specific actions around the City Centre.

It should be noted that the majority of our enforcement is done without the need to formally enforce through notices or penalty notices, often once officers inform people that they are in breach of the order and should they continue the officers will enforce, this is enough to resolve the matter.

The issue of beggars in the City Centre is a polarising matter, there are those who say we should never enforce, there are those that say we don't do enough, we are never going to satisfy both sides of that argument.

The PSPO has allowed us to take action that has resulted in a large number of individuals accessing support and accommodation through joint working and referrals with other agencies such as the Salvation Army. Equally we are amongst the top Councils in the country when it comes to taking enforcement action against beggars. This course of action is only taken when we have exhausted all support options and the person in question is refusing to engage with support and is continuing in their actions.

Ahead of 2021 and the City of Culture we have helped implement a new approach to busking in the City which is designed to make the City more welcoming to buskers and street performers. We have observed the recent trial of these new measures and we have not noticed any problems caused by these changes and as such we are supportive.

I am in agreement and fully support the proposed amendments to the renewal of the PSPO and believe that the extension is needed to ensure the good work we have progressed since the implementation of the order can be continued, were there to be no order I believe our ability to manage behaviours in the City Centre would be much hampered.

West Midlands Police

I am PC 5530 Nicholas Mansell of the West Midlands Police and I am the Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator for Coventry Neighbourhood Policing Unit.

Coventry City Centre is the single largest demand area within Coventry in terms of calls for service in relation to anti-social behaviour (ASB). The city centre area regularly record 100 calls for service each month. For the month of October 2019, for example, Coventry City Centre recorded 101 calls in relation to ASB

The existing Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) covers a wide range of behaviours, some of which if taken to an extreme would constitute a criminal act, however, many of those behaviours are at a level where it can often be difficult for Police officers to use the full powers of the law to address them.

Equally many of these behaviours, when compared to many of the calls being received by our service, may not receive a high priority and often by the time resources can be allocated the people in question have moved on. The PSPO allows us to work in partnership with Coventry City Council enforcement officers to better address many behaviours in a quicker manner

Begging has always been an issue for Coventry City Centre, as it is for most cities in the country. The police currently can take action when the offence of begging, which is the direct request for money from a person, is either witnessed by a member of the public or by an officer. Most begging offenders will not commit this offence when a uniformed officer is present and most are aware of whom the police officers are even when they are wearing plain clothes. Therefore, evidence directly from police officers is limited.

Begging takes place across the city centre, less so once outside the ring road. Begging often takes place around car parks near to the payment meters. This is a common location when calls for service are received by police. Other locations include outside shops and being approached in the street or square. Broadgate is a common location for beggars to approach members of the public and requests for money (spare change) are made.

Coventry Police do target the beggars and currently we hold a number of Criminal Behaviour Orders against begging offenders. These are individuals who persist in the offence of begging and due to the evidence gained, the police are able to gain conditions set by the court to behaviours they must undertake – such as drug/alcohol treatment and conditions they must not undertake – such as sit on the floor in Coventry City Centre. Sitting on the floor is an excellent example of how an individual sets themselves up to beg without completing any offence.

Begging offences does take up a significant amount of police time and resource and multiple calls for service are received on a daily basis. Gaining Criminal Behaviour Orders is further work that is resource intensive and will take a police officer off the streets for a significant amount of time.

We have found that the way in which the PSPO deals with begging removes much of the ambiguity as to whether a person is begging and as a result it is far quicker and more efficient to deal with people, whilst always trying to place referrals and support at the forefront of how we deal with these individuals

Peddling, the sale of goods by individuals moving through an area, is one of my responsibilities. The vast majority of Pedlar Certificate applications are refused as they do not fit the criteria published by the Home Office. In the last two years I have only accepted two applications.

Therefore we believe the PSPO is still an appropriate instrument for dealing with the issue of street trading as very few examples fall into the definition of peddling, i.e briefly passing through a location when the application for permission and similar is not practical.

Charity Collectors are not often a subject of police calls for service. Coventry Police does not receive many calls for service regarding this issue but it does come up within public meetings and forums, so clarity for all parties about what is allowed and what is not within the City Centre would be welcomed.

Skateboarding can be an issue that is reported to police. There are only small numbers of reports relating to skateboards that have been said to pass individuals very closely and there have been reports of collisions. Police are limited in the powers we can use against skateboards unless it fits into Public Order legislation (Harassment Alarm Distress) or Public Nuisance. Therefore the guidance and powers contained in the PSPO continues to be welcomed.

In summary, we have found the existing PSPO to be helpful in helping West Midlands police and partner agencies to better manage our resources and the City Centre in general and we support the proposed renewal.

Business Improvement District (BID team)

6th February 2020

Dear Liam

PSPO Letter of Support for the Renewal for the PSPO – Coventry City Centre

Following a Consultation with the BID Board and other members, we are delighted to confirm and offer our support to the renewal in the PSPO for Coventry City Centre. As we move to be City of Culture 2021 this important piece of legislation will assist the city greatly and it's renewal is paramount.

Yours sincerely

Trish

Trish Willetts
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