

Appendix 3 – Summary of Responses for Key Partners

I am PC 5530 Nicholas Mansell of the West Midlands Police, currently stationed at Coventry Central Police Station. My role in the police is that of ASB Coordinator for the city.

The 2014 ASB Act gave a number of tools and powers for partners to utilise in this area. The PSPO's are an important part of this framework and they give partners the ability to challenge behaviour that is not necessarily covered by other laws.

The City Centre PSPO that is due for renewal has a very important element for police, and this is in relation to begging. Whilst there is a criminal offence of begging, it is very difficult to mount successful prosecutions due to the lack of members of the public willing to give statements and the fact that most offenders immediately see police officers and do not commit the offence whilst they are in view.

The PSPO in relation to begging gives police officers a process of interaction. All breaches of PSPO are sent through to Coventry City Council for their consideration of how to proceed. This means that many beggars can be offered support through a variety of means, including housing, employment possibilities and assistance with health matters.

Since the beginning of the year, Coventry Police have submitted over 50 PSPO breaches within Coventry City Centre to the council for their consideration. These breaches will cover all PSPO's currently in force.

Skateboarding and cycling form an important part of the PSPO and this gives police officers the option of taking further action if they deem the behaviour to be inconsiderate or indeed dangerous. Again, police officers will refer all decisions of how to proceed to Coventry City Council. This ensures a consistent approach and the most appropriate interventions are taken.

Police officers rarely get involved in incidents involving street trading, distribution of publicity materials or charity collectors, but having the PSPO process allows for a flexible approach, and it is appreciated that some individuals can be problematic, and an officer in uniform can be utilised for a successful outcome.

West Midlands Police see the value to community safety within this PSPO renewal and fully support this process.

My name is Lyndsay Smith, and I am Deputy Manager for Coventry BID. The BID's main purpose is to generate footfall into the City Centre through our marketing channels, we fund the city centre's retail radio scheme, and provide a team of street patrol officers.

We are funded by the businesses themselves and everything we put in place is above the Council's baseline agreement. Whilst speaking with businesses we get to know their concerns and issues regarding the city centre and assist where possible. Coventry BID is uniquely positioned to benefit the public and the businesses, working to make the city centre a safer, more attractive place to work, shop and socialise.

The past year has seen a rise in the number of E-bikes within the city centre, especially as they are used as a mode of transport for companies who deliver food orders for our hospitality businesses. This has resulted in pedestrianised areas being infiltrated by e-bike riders.

Interactions between cyclists and other vulnerable road users in shared spaces are increasing and it's a high priority for the BID to support any measures that can be put into place to reduce risk of injury. We work to make the city centre accessible to all visitors and it has been highlighted that e-bike incidents heavily contribute to the reasons why some of Coventry's residents feel reluctant to visit the city centre to shop.

We note and have been consulted with regards to the proposals by Coventry City Council and West Midlands Police to address the growing issue of ebikes in the City Centre. We support the measures being taken and hope that they are successful and see a change in behaviours of those using ebikes in the City Centre.

We support the renewal of the existing order but would ask that the situation with regards to ebike usage in the City Centre is monitored and acted on as appropriate.

My name is Simon Hutt and I am employed as a Street Enforcement Manager and I manage the Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers (NEO's) that patrol the City Centre.

The City Centre PSPO has been in place for some time now and I would say there is good awareness of the order and the conditions within it by the NEO's. It allows for them to speak to people in the City Centre that may not be aware of some of the conditions contained within it, and can get people to amend their behaviours that may be detrimental to others, without needing to resort to enforcement.

The NEO's have a good knowledge of the City Centre and many of the individuals that often frequent it. This can include those that beg and other such activities. We work very closely with the Council's rough sleeping team and other support agencies to refer individuals in that we feel have support needs and may have vulnerabilities.

However, we do not lose sight of the importance of ensuring the City Centre is a welcoming place for visitors and somewhere businesses want to be. The fact we issue breach notices mean the enforcement of the order allows for greater flexibility in deciding a sanction as opposed to simply handing out Fixed Penalty Notices, which wouldn't be appropriate for many of the people we deal with.

I meet regularly with Police, BID and support agencies to discuss problematic individuals in the City Centre and to decide on the best course of action, as enforcement alone rarely works unless it is alongside support and something to positively impact people's lifestyles.

There are some practical difficulties with enforcing aspects of the order, such as the recent increase in ebikes in the City Centre, considering officers on foot trying to engage with bikes travelling at considerable speed isn't easy, but we are working closely with Police colleagues and others within the Council to address this.

Recent years saw complications with Coronavirus social distancing restrictions, which complicated approaching people and enforcement generally, but we are now seeing a return to normality.

Overall I feel the order works well in the City and support its renewal.

My name is John Toman, I manage Coventry City Council's rough sleeping team. We work throughout the City looking to assist those that are living on the streets and the street community in general. Much of our work is outreach and the City Centre constitutes a large part of our workload.

As part of our work we look to assist people in accessing accommodation and support, access to benefits and anything to do with their general wellbeing. Through this work we often interact with large parts of the street community, some of whom will beg in the City Centre.

It should be noted that very few people who beg in the City Centre are actually homeless, we are confident that we have enough bedspaces and accommodation options that there is no need for people to sleep rough in Coventry.

However, it is a reality that people do beg, we encourage them not to do so and we have also established a number of "Change into Action" giving points where the public can tap their card and contribute to a fund that we use to provide items for people in need of support.

The rough sleeping team do not get directly involved in enforcement activity, it would harm our ability to support people and interact with them if we did. People are referred to us and we work with Council and Police colleagues where people begging become problematic and we try to offer support and encourage them to access services and address their vulnerabilities.

The issue of enforcement is a sensitive one with regards to beggars and whilst we would not support the principle of taking vulnerable people to court for a financial fine, we do accept that there are occasions where someone's behaviour is such, and their refusal to accept support leaves others with little alternative but to take enforcement action.

We feel that the approach of using breach notices, referrals with court options as a last resort is an appropriate one and as such, we would support the renewal of the City Centre PSPO.