

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
Cabinet

26th August 2026
1st September 2026

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Cohesion – Councillor J McNicholas

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities

Ward affected:

St Michaels

Title: City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order 2026

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) is a legal tool designed to address anti-social behaviour in specific public areas. It allows local authorities to restrict or prohibit certain activities to improve community safety and quality of life.

The City Centre PSPO has been in place for a number of years and remains an important tool in helping partners tackle anti-social behaviour and issues that impact on the quality of life of those using the city centre. The current Order covers a range of measures, including busking, cycling and behaviours that can cause nuisance, alarm or distress. As the existing Order expires in November 2026, this report proposes a new City Centre PSPO for a further three-year period. The proposed Order retains a number of existing provisions whilst introducing updates to reflect current issues, consultation feedback and operational experience.

The Council can only make or amend a PSPO when it is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the activities carried out, or likely to be carried out, in a public place have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the area and are persistent, continuing and unreasonable. The Council must also be satisfied that any restrictions imposed are justified.

The Council has the power to make a PSPO following consultation with the Police, other relevant bodies and the public. As part of the development of the proposed replacement Order, a public consultation took place during June and July 2026 and generated 884 responses. Overall support for renewal of the PSPO was high, with 85% of respondents in favour, 8% not in favour and 7% unsure. Detailed consultation findings are set out in Appendix 3a of the report.

Following public consultation, a new City Centre PSPO is proposed for a further three-year period and includes the following:

- Prohibitions focused on conduct that causes harassment, alarm or distress.
- Provisions regulating the use of amplification equipment.
- Controls on temporary structures, including gazebos and stalls.
- Provisions relating to busking, cycling, e-bikes and e-scooters.

Recommendations:

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Consider the report and submit any comments and/or Recommendations to Cabinet for consideration at their meeting on 1st September 2026.

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Note the consultation outcome (Appendix 3a of the report) and accompanying Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 4 of the report).
- 2) Consider any comments and/or Recommendations received from Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee following their consideration of this matter at their meeting on 26 August 2026.
- 3) Consider and approve a new City Centre PSPO (Appendix 1 of the report).
- 4) Delegate authority to the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities to bring the Order into effect from 21st November 2026.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1	City Centre (2026) Public Spaces Protection Order for Coventry
Appendix 1a	City Centre PSPO Master map
Appendix 1b	Map showing designated pedestrian area.
Appendix 2	Code of Conduct for Performers

Appendix 3a Summary of Public Consultation Undertaken.
Appendix 3b Formal Responses to Public Consultation Undertaken.
Appendix 3c Results of Observed Compliance for e-bikes.
Appendix 4 Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes – Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee – 26th August 2026

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order 2026

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The current City Centre PSPO was introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to address behaviours occurring within the city centre that were having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those who live in, work in, or visit the area.
- 1.2 While the Order has provided a useful enforcement framework, operational experience, partnership working and evolving guidance indicate that aspects of the current provisions could be updated to better reflect current best practice. There is a need to ensure that restrictions remain focused on behaviours that cause harassment, alarm or distress, and that they are proportionate, enforceable and legally robust.

2 Options considered and recommended proposal

Option 1 – Do not implement the PSPO Order 2026 (Not Recommended)

- 2.1 This option is not recommended as it would reduce the Council's ability to address the ongoing issues affecting the quality of life for those who live, work and visit the city centre. An investment of further wardens has been made by Coventry City Council and will be realised in September 2026. This additional resource will play a key role in guarding and protecting the public spaces in the city centre and this Order will give them additional tools to do so. The Order creates an additional layer of protection which can also be used by policing colleagues, creating a multi-agency approach for the benefit of those affected by anti-social behaviour. Without this option the Council's capability would be severely reduced.

Option 2 – Implement the PSPO Order 2026 (Recommended)

- 2.2 The proposed new Order provides an opportunity not only to update the current provisions, but also to modernise the overall approach and ensure it remains effective in addressing current and emerging issues within the city centre.
- 2.3 The evidence gathered through day-to-day operational activity, partner feedback and the recent public consultation demonstrates that many of the issues which led to the original PSPO remain present within the city centre. Whilst some behaviours have changed over time, concerns regarding harassment, noise nuisance, obstruction and unsafe use of cycles continue to be reported. The proposed Order has therefore been updated to reflect current issues whilst ensuring restrictions remain proportionate and enforceable.
- 2.4 The proposed Order retains a number of existing provisions that continue to be effective, whilst introducing a revised approach to certain behaviours and new measures to address issues that have become more prominent in recent years.

- 2.5 Existing provisions relating to busking, cycling, skateboarding, and the use of e-bikes and e-scooters are retained, with minor refinements to ensure clarity and enforceability.
- 2.6 The proposed Order introduces new provisions to address the use of amplification equipment and the erection of temporary structures such as gazebos and stalls, both of which have been identified as sources of complaint and disruption within the city centre.
- 2.7 A further change within the proposed Order is the move away from activity-based prohibitions, such as blanket restrictions on begging or unauthorised collections, towards a behaviour-based framework. Under this approach, the focus is placed on conduct that results in harassment, alarm, or distress, rather than the mere act of requesting money or being present within the city centre.

Behaviour-Based Approach to Requests for Money or Donations

- 2.8 The proposed Order focuses on conduct that amounts to aggressive, pressuring, or harassing requests for money or donations. This includes behaviours such as persistently following individuals after a refusal, intentionally obstructing a person's path, using threatening or intimidating language, or continuing to make requests after being asked to stop.
- 2.9 Importantly, the proposed provision makes clear that it does not apply to individuals who are merely sitting, standing, or present within the city centre, nor to those who are passively requesting assistance where no harmful behaviour is evident.

Amplification Equipment

- 2.10 The proposed Order introduces a new prohibition on the use of amplification equipment within the city centre unless authorised by Coventry City Council. This measure has been developed in response to a growing number of complaints from both businesses and members of the public regarding the use of amplified sound.
- 2.11 These complaints relate to excessive noise levels, disruption to commercial premises, and incidents where the use of amplification has contributed to an environment that is perceived as intimidating or distressing. In some cases, amplification has been used in conjunction with other activities that compound its impact, including the establishment of temporary structures and prolonged occupation of busy pedestrian areas.
- 2.12 The proposed prohibition provides a clear and enforceable mechanism to manage these issues, while retaining the ability for the Council to grant permission for appropriate and organised activities where necessary.

Temporary Structures

- 2.13 In parallel with the controls on amplification, the proposed Order includes a prohibition on the erection or placement of temporary structures, such as gazebos, canopies, stalls, and display stands, without prior authorisation from the Council.
- 2.14 Operational experience indicates that such structures are frequently used in conjunction with activities that generate complaints, particularly where they obstruct pedestrian routes or contribute to congestion within the city centre. This can create

difficulties for individuals navigating the area, including those with mobility needs, and can lead to wider concerns about safety and accessibility.

- 2.15 The proposed provision also includes a requirement for individuals to comply with any direction given by an authorised officer to remove a structure. This ensures that officers have a practical and immediate means of addressing issues where they arise.

Retained Provisions

- 2.16 The proposed Order retains a number of existing provisions that continue to be necessary and effective. These include controls relating to busking and street performance, which remain subject to the Coventry City Centre Code of Conduct for Performers.
- 2.17 The proposed Order retains the provisions governing the use of pedal cycles, skateboards, and manual scooters. The requirement for such activities to be undertaken in a careful and considerate manner, and for individuals to dismount when directed by an authorised officer, continues to provide a proportionate mechanism for managing risk and preventing nuisance.
- 2.18 Similarly, the prohibition on the use of e-bikes and e-scooters within the restricted area is retained, with appropriate exemptions for mobility use and allowances for individuals to push such bikes through the area.

3 Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Public consultation was undertaken in the form of a survey which ran from 22nd June to 26th July 2026. Council officers undertook surveys in the city centre and there was an online survey.
- 3.2 The consultation generated 884 responses from residents, businesses and other stakeholders. Whilst views differed on some of the proposed measures, the overall response provides strong support for the proposed new Order that would retain a proportionate framework to address behaviours that negatively impact the experience of those who live in, work in, and visit the city centre.
- 3.3 The result of the consultation is detailed in Appendix 3a of the report. In summary:
- 87% of respondents supported the proposed changes to begging and street collections.
 - 84% of the respondents agreed with banning amplification other than for authorised events and proportionate use in any protest or demonstration.
 - 77% of respondents agreed with the proposed measure to ban temporary structures in the City Centre. This relates to Gazebos and similar.
 - 85% are in favour of the other measures proposed as part of the Order, including the restriction of e-bikes/e-scooters, pedal cycles, busking and similar.

- 3.4 There were a number of themes that ran throughout the consultation and in response to different questions when people raised objections to the proposals.
- 3.5 Some people disagreed with the creation of an Order at all and felt that public spaces should not be places where rules and conditions are imposed on people.
- 3.6 Some respondents expressed concerns that the proposed measures could affect the ability to protest, demonstrate or express political or religious views. The proposed Order is not intended to restrict these activities. Instead, it seeks to manage the use of amplification equipment in a proportionate way that balances these rights with the interests of others using the city centre.
- 3.7 Authorised events will be permitted to use amplification equipment. Other requests, including those relating to protests and demonstrations, will be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure any use of amplification is proportionate and appropriate to the activity taking place. Details of the application process, including a dedicated email address, will be published on the Council's website.
- 3.8 It is recognised that some political stalls, demonstrations and similar activities may require the use of a table or display stand. Nothing in the proposed Order is intended to prevent lawful protest, political campaigning, trade union activity, faith activity or civic awareness raising conducted peacefully. Where amplification equipment or temporary structures are required, authorisation may be sought from the Council. Permission will normally be granted provided any table or similar structure is of a reasonable size and does not obstruct pedestrians. Details of the application process, including a dedicated email address, will be published on the Council's website.
- 3.9 The Council has carefully considered these concerns when developing the proposed Order. The intention is not to prevent lawful protest, faith activity, campaigning, busking or charitable activity. Rather, the focus is on addressing behaviours that have a detrimental impact on others and ensuring activities within the city centre can take place in a safe, proportionate and well-managed way.
- 3.10 A number of formal responses were received as part of the consultation process (Appendix 3b of the report). These responses have been carefully considered and have helped inform the final proposals set out within this report.
- 3.11 Responses were similar to the public consultation, some in support, some against and most asking that we take a pragmatic approach to different groups that may need or request amplification. A Response from Guide Dogs for the blind highlighted the benefit of restricting the number of temporary structures in the city centre and other considerations as outlined in the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 4 of the report).
- 3.12 Consultation also took place with key stakeholders, including West Midlands Police, Coventry Business Improvement District and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Overall, stakeholders were supportive of the proposed approach. It is a requirement of granting a PSPO that it can be shown that it is needed and proportionate to a given issue. Statements and responses from specific organisations and their support for the renewal is an important consideration.

- 3.13 Alongside the consultation, a three-day observation exercise was carried out to assess compliance with the requirement for e-bike users to dismount when entering the restricted pedestrian zone. The exercise was undertaken remotely using CCTV, providing an accurate reflection of current compliance levels. The findings are summarised in Appendix 3c of the report.
- 3.14 Compliance with the requirement for e-bike riders to dismount within the pedestrian zone was low, with only around 23% of observed riders complying with the restriction. Whilst this indicates that some riders are dismounting, the assessment demonstrates that non-compliance remains and that the issue continues to be present within the city centre. The findings therefore provide evidence to support the continued inclusion of this restriction within the proposed Order.
- 3.15 Whilst the evidence supports the continued need for restrictions on e-bikes within the pedestrian zone, officers have also considered whether a different approach may be appropriate for council-authorised shared cycle hire schemes.
- 3.16 Since the introduction of the Council-authorised shared cycle hire scheme, officers have identified significant use of these bicycles within the city centre pedestrianised area. A monitoring exercise undertaken over a three-day period recorded more than seventy-nine shared hire bicycles passing through the restricted zone. Unlike privately operated electric bicycles, the shared hire bicycles are subject to geofencing technology that disables electric assistance within the pedestrianised area, meaning that riders must pedal the bicycle in the same manner as a conventional cycle whilst within the restricted area.
- 3.17 The Council recognises the importance of encouraging sustainable and active travel and considers that the managed nature of the scheme, together with the geofencing arrangements, materially reduces the concerns that originally led to restrictions on the use of e-bikes within the city centre. The available evidence does not currently indicate that these bicycles are generating a disproportionate number of complaints, incidents, or enforcement concerns. In addition, prohibiting the use of shared hire bicycles within the restricted area may create significant operational and enforcement challenges, particularly where users have legitimately hired bicycles without appreciating that they are classified as electrically assisted pedal cycles. On balance, the Council considers that a limited exemption for Council-authorised shared cycle hire schemes operating approved geofencing controls may provide a proportionate means of supporting sustainable travel whilst maintaining public safety within the city centre.

4 Public Engagement and awareness of changes.

- 4.1 A communications plan will be in place to reinforce the message to buskers, preachers, and anyone else that may currently be using amplification or erecting unauthorised temporary structures such as gazebos in the city centre should the renewal be granted. We will be using an approach of “Engage, Educate and, if necessary, Enforce.”
- 4.2 Public signage is regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate, and the Order will be publicised in accordance with the Act and the Regulations.

- 4.3 If the proposed Order is made, during the initial weeks of its operation, it is intended to focus on engagement and raising awareness of the new measures. Enforcement will only be used where there are non-engagement and repetition of prohibited activities.
- 4.4 The Council will publish the new Order on its website, and it will be communicated widely via the erection of notices across the city centre, a press release, social media and on the Council's website.
- 4.5 Attention will be given to groups most likely to be affected by the changes, including buskers, faith groups, campaigners, and operators who may seek permission to use amplification equipment or temporary structures. This will help ensure expectations are clear from the outset and reduce the likelihood of unnecessary enforcement action.

5 Enforcement Activity

- 5.1 Enforcement will be a key element of the PSPO and as such ensuring the right approach is essential. Therefore, a multi-agency engagement, intervention and enforcement approach to support the Order, if approved, has been agreed with partners.

There are a number of enforcement options ranging from a warning, and/or issuing FPNs, to prosecution where the FPN is not paid or it is not considered appropriate to issue a FPN. Where a person believes to have breached the PSPO refuses to give his/her name and address then they may be prosecuted and on conviction fined up to level 3 fine on the standard scale, currently £1000.

The recruitment of six additional Community Wardens, including a supervisor provides a significant opportunity to increase visibility, engagement and enforcement activity within the city centre. The PSPO will be a key tool in supporting this work and improving compliance with expected standards of behaviour.

- 5.2 In addition, there have been improvements to the communications between the Council and Police, with shared teams channels, documents and similar so all agencies are aware of enforcement activity against known individuals that cause problems in the city centre. This should make it easier to track people and escalate enforcement as necessary, whilst always being aware to offer support for any vulnerabilities.
- 5.3 The engagement and enforcement activity will be monitored through the fortnightly city centre partnership meeting attended by the Police, BID and the City Council. Furthermore, PSPOs will be added to the Council's monthly City Tasking meeting that reports to the Coventry Community Safety Partnership. This will provide data that can evidence the effectiveness of the PSPOs in the city and enforcement activity.

6 Timetable for implementing this decision

- 6.1 If approved, the City Centre PSPO will take effect on 21st November 2026 as set out in the table below:

Milestone	Date to be completed
Report to Scrutiny Coordination Committee	26 th August 2026
Report to Cabinet	1 st September 2026
Publish new City Centre PSPO	2 nd November 2026
City Centre PSPO comes into force	21 st November 2026
Publicity and Engagement period	7 th December 2026

- 6.2 It is proposed that a two-week period of education and publicising of the amendment be put in place to support and encourage behaviour change and compliance for the new measures. This two-week period would provide a pragmatic risk-based approach to enforcement, with the priority being education and support in most cases, but officers reserve the right to enforce as needed.
- 6.3 A PSPO is valid for a period of three years, and can be rescinded, amended, or extended at any point during that period. Any amendment or extension will need to follow the consultation and approval process again.

7 Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities

7.1 Financial implications

Signage, stencils and materials to inform the public of the new proposed measures are expected to cost less than £1000 and will be met from existing budgets.

No additional resource will be required to implement the proposed amended PSPO. Any additional income generated by the introduction of a PSPO is expected to be minimal and will contribute towards Council resources.

7.2 Legal implications

Under sections 59-75 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, local authorities have powers to make PSPOs.

The Council can only make a PSPO when it is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the activities carried out or likely to be carried out in a public place have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the area and are persistent, continuing, and unreasonable. The Council would also need to be satisfied that the restrictions imposed were justified.

Should anyone object to the granting of a PSPO they would have to make a High Court application within 6 weeks of the Order being granted.

For that appeal to be successful they would have to show that the Council did not have the power to make the Order, as the issue covered has not been demonstrated, usually by empirical evidence, to be a significant enough issue to justify the restriction. The other grounds for the appeal would be to demonstrate that the consultation process was inadequate.

PSPOs can only apply to public places. This means any place to which the public, or and sections of the public, on payment or otherwise, have access to as of right or by virtue of express or implied permission.

The Council will decide whether it is appropriate to issue a fixed penalty notice for any breach of the PSPO witnessed by an enforcing officer. In line with other PSPOs in Coventry, any FPN for non-compliance with a PSPO will be set at £100 reduced to £60 if paid within 14 days. If the FPN is not paid, court proceedings can be initiated to prosecute for the offence of failing to comply with the PSPO where the maximum fine is currently £1000 (level 3 on the standard scale). Following conviction, the Council could apply for a Criminal Behaviour Order which can contain both prohibitions and positive requirements.

Regulation 2 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (Publication of Public Spaces Protection Orders) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/2591) requires publication on the Council's website and by notices.

8 Other implications

8.1 How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>)

Crime and Disorder

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour through partnership working is central to the work of the Community Safety Team and Strategic Assessment work.

8.2 How is risk being managed?

The principal risk is that public confidence in the Order could be undermined if restrictions are not applied consistently or enforcement activity is insufficient. This risk will be mitigated through increased city centre resources, joint working with partners, ongoing monitoring and regular review of enforcement activity.

8.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

8.4 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

An Equality Impact Assessment to ensure no minority group is unduly disadvantaged by the implementation of any amended Order has been conducted (Appendix 4 of the report).

Consultation responses highlighted concerns around accessibility, including the impact of noise, temporary structures and unsafe cycling on disabled people, older residents and those with mobility or sensory impairments. The proposed Order seeks to address these issues while ensuring reasonable exemptions remain available where appropriate.

The Order, if approved will not apply to authorised shared cycle hire schemes operating approved geofencing controls within the city centre and mobility scooters, or to a person who is using an E bike or E scooter as a mobility aid in circumstances where it is not reasonably practicable for that person to dismount and push.

8.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

The purpose of taking action is to address adverse behaviours in the city centre, to improve the environment and wellbeing of the community. It is recognised that cycling is an environmentally friendly format of travel and should be encouraged and Coventry continues to support and encourage active forms of transport including cycling.

8.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Powers granted will also be available to West Midlands Police and the BID, subject to officers being trained/qualified.

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