

# Welcoming and Safe Town Centres

Community Safety and  
Regulatory Services



# What does Welcoming and Safe mean?

Stockton Borough has six distinct Town Centres, each with their own unique characteristics and different opportunities and challenges:

- **Stockton**
- **Thornaby**
- **Billingham**
- **Yarm**
- **Ingleby Barwick**
- **Norton**

What description defines 'Safe and Welcoming' for all of these locations?

# What does Welcoming and Safe mean?

**Town Centre safety was debated in Parliament at the end of last year and it's fair to say ministers also had difficulty in narrowing down this issue as it impacts all who live, work or visit our Town Centres: Bus drivers, taxi drivers, shoppers, retail workers, business owners, revellers in the night-time economy, and vulnerable members of our community, including the homeless and those with addictions.**

**The safety issues were perhaps best summed up as follows:**

***“Safety in our town centres is a subject that the public are deeply concerned about. It has a totemic impact on how we feel about where we live; people love their community and hate it when a small number of people are able to wreck it for everyone else.”***

# What does Welcoming and Safe mean?

## **Other authorities have described their vision for their Town Centres, for example, York:**

We want to create safe and welcoming town centres, that are vibrant and can adapt to change. The most important aspect of this, is people. People create the noise, soul and life of a town, and crucially, the captive audience for businesses to thrive. People, or footfall, is the key to a successful place. When footfall and vibrancy drop, fewer services and shops can be supported, vacancies rise and employment falls.

A vibrant and popular place will attract people and support shops and services for our residents. By influencing how and when the town centres are used, and adapting key spaces, we can manage this better and optimise the benefits for all.

# Welcoming and Safe in Stockton

## **We need to consider what our definition is – For example:**

Welcoming and safe town centres foster a sense of community, inclusivity and vibrancy. Visitors feel comfortable, respected and valued and the areas are a thriving environment for businesses, cultural events and social interactions.

Through collaboration with local stakeholders, including the business community and residents we can enhance quality of life and wellbeing for residents and visitors alike, making our six town centres an attractive destination for all.

## **What is Stockton's definition?**

# Proposed Scope and Plan

- **Establish the key issues within each of the Borough's six town centres with regards safety.**
- **Understand the measures already in place to address these issues and ascertain any gaps in future plans.**
- **Identify any potential learning from other parts of the UK.**

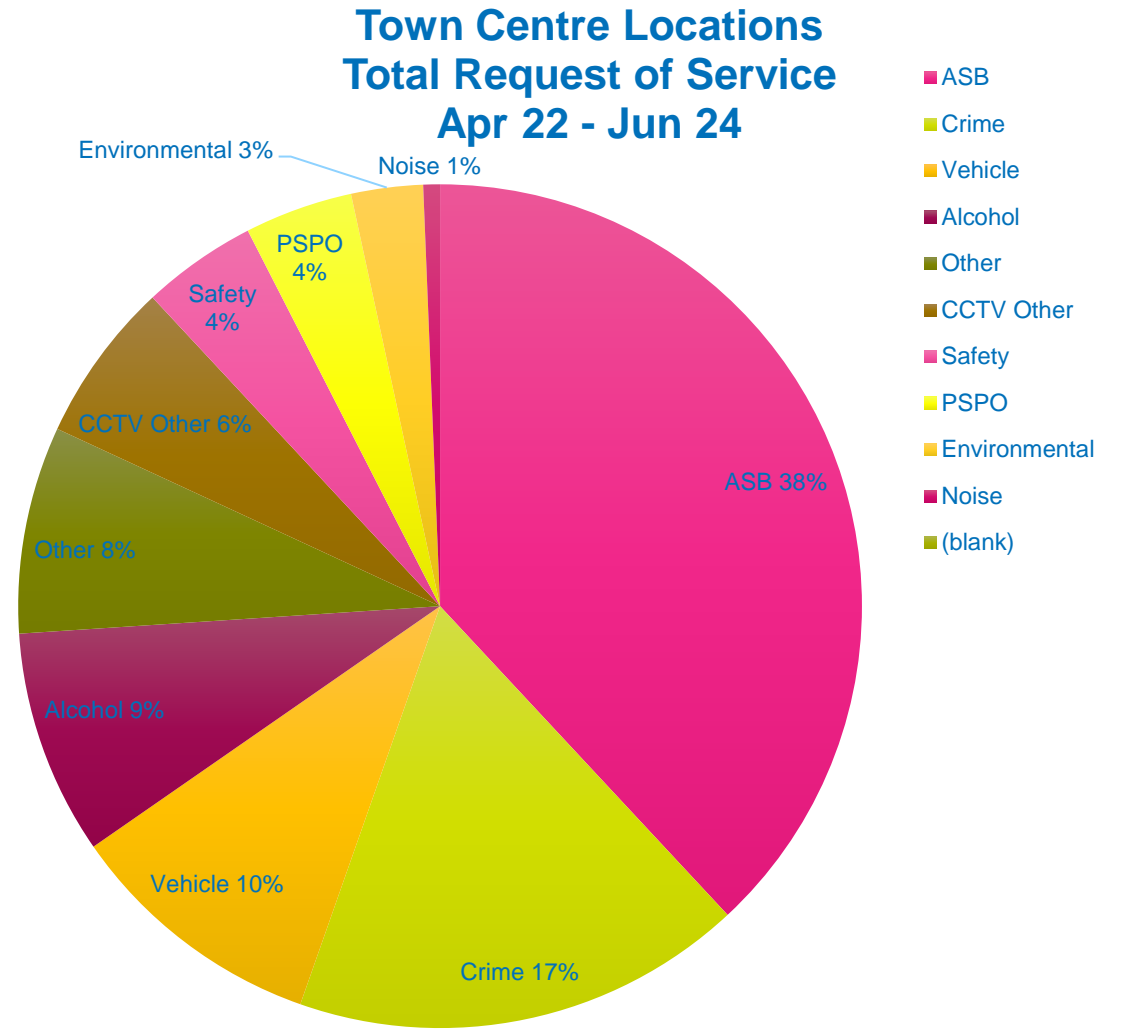
# Establish the key issues

## What do we already know?

- **PSPO Consultation December 2022:**
  - **Survey identified public perceptions of feeling unsafe in Stockton Town Centre and Norton Town Centre.**
  - **Respondents expressed particular concern about alcohol related ASB and Aggressive Begging.**
  - **We know that Stockton Town Centre has the highest volume of reported crime and ASB.**
  - **We know that in comparison, Yarm and Ingleby Barwick have the lowest volume of reported crime and ASB.**

**The Pie chart illustrates Community Safety requests for service data for all six Town Centres.**

**Unsurprisingly, ASB (38%) and Crime (17%) make up the largest percentages of all requests.**



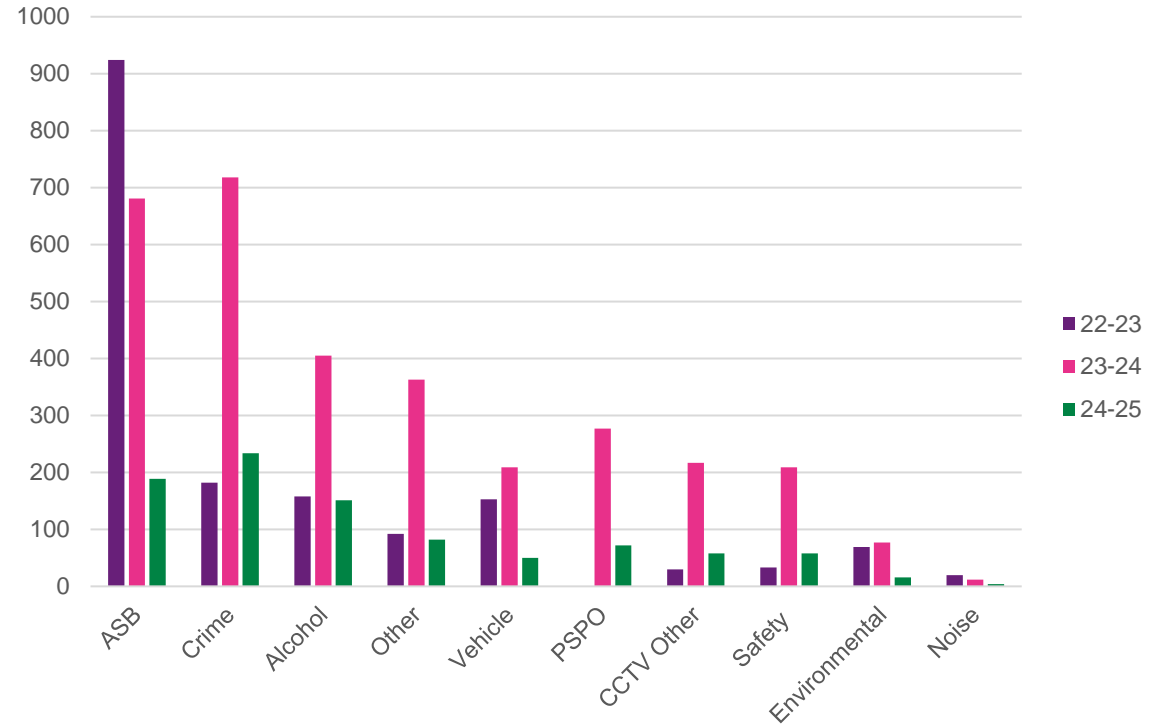


# Establish the key issues

## Stockton

Stockton has the highest number of incidents, with over 900 ASB reports in 22/23 dropping below 700 last year. Crime reported to SBC was over 700 last year.

Last year we started including CCTV monitored incidents in the figures, which accounts for the increases in other categories.



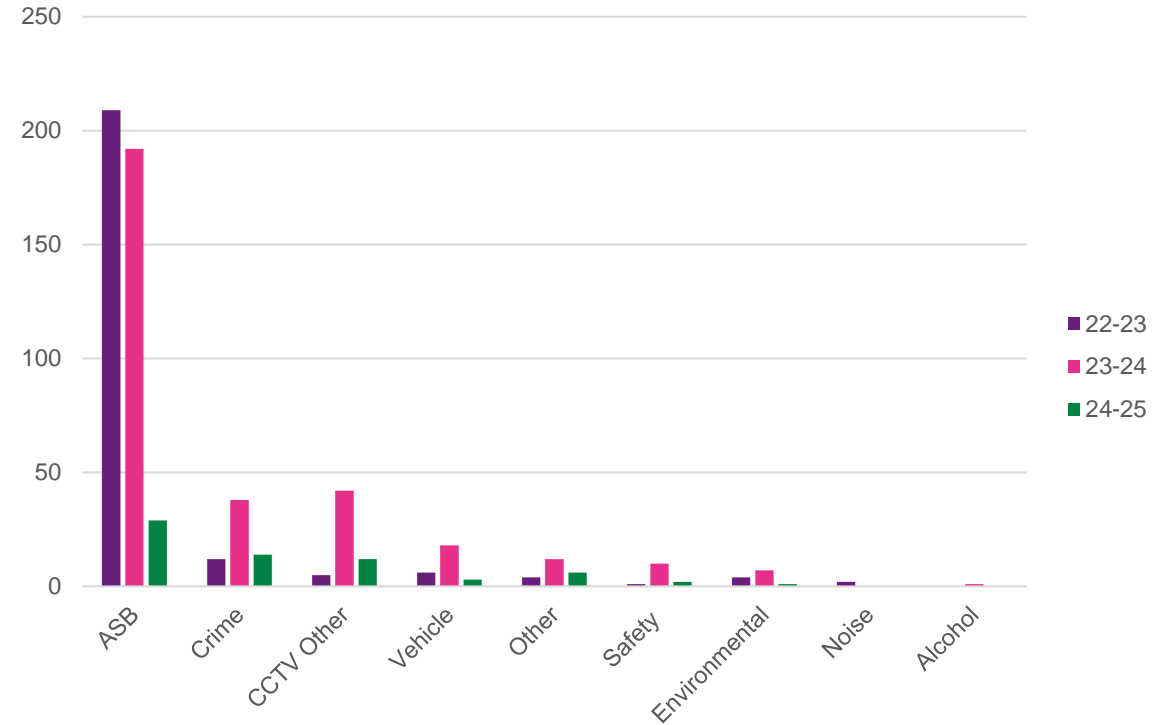
# Establish the key issues

## Thornaby

ASB continues to be the stand-out issue in Thornaby at around 200 incidents each year for the last two years.

A group of young people recently completed the 'Making Good' programme successfully and have not been involved in further incidents.

Thornaby TC is covered by ASB Hot Spot patrols, funded by the Home Office.



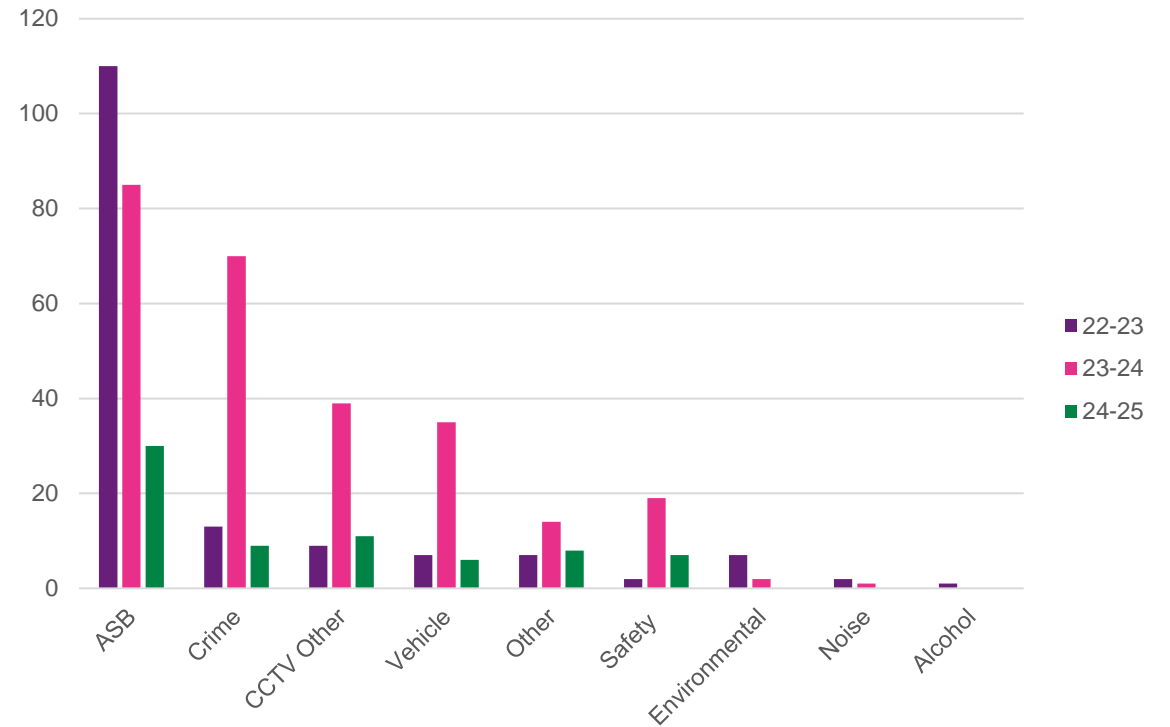
# Establish the key issues

## Billingham

ASB reports in Billingham are around half that of that in Thornaby by comparison.

Off Road bikes are often a cause for concern.

Billingham is also in the ASB Hot Spot patrol routes which are delivering reductions in ASB reports.

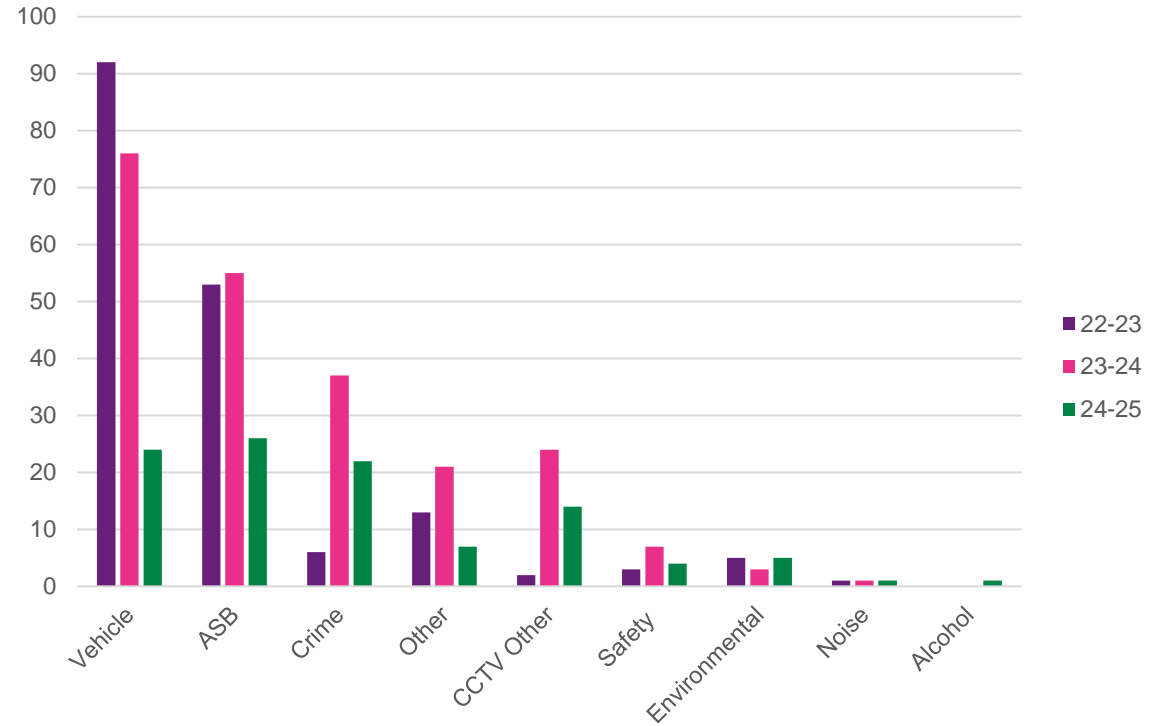


# Establish the key issues

## Yarm

Parking issues are the most reported category for Yarm, with low reports of ASB each year, with an average of 50 reports per year.

Challenges associated with the busy night time economy do occur but are well managed between partners including our licensing team.



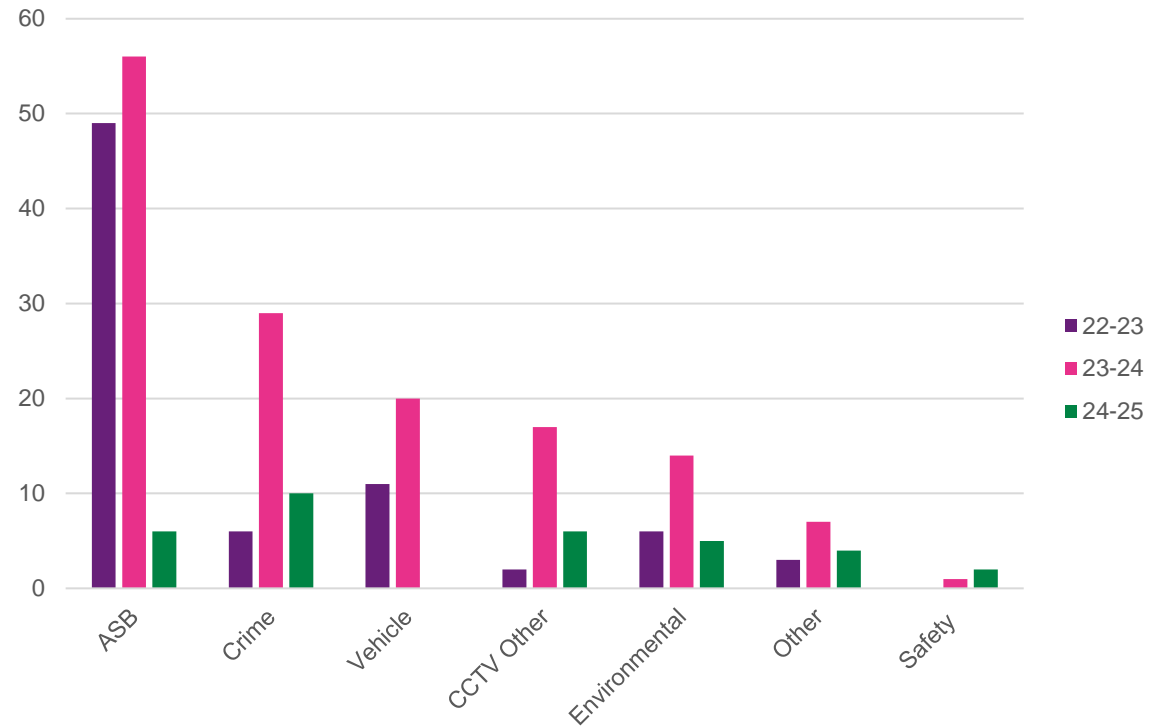
# Establish the key issues

## Ingleby Barwick

ASB issues remain low in Ingleby Barwick at around 50-60 reports a year.

Vehicle issues around schools do feature, either through direct reports or via elected members.

Demand due to reports are low but perceptions including fear of ASB are poor.



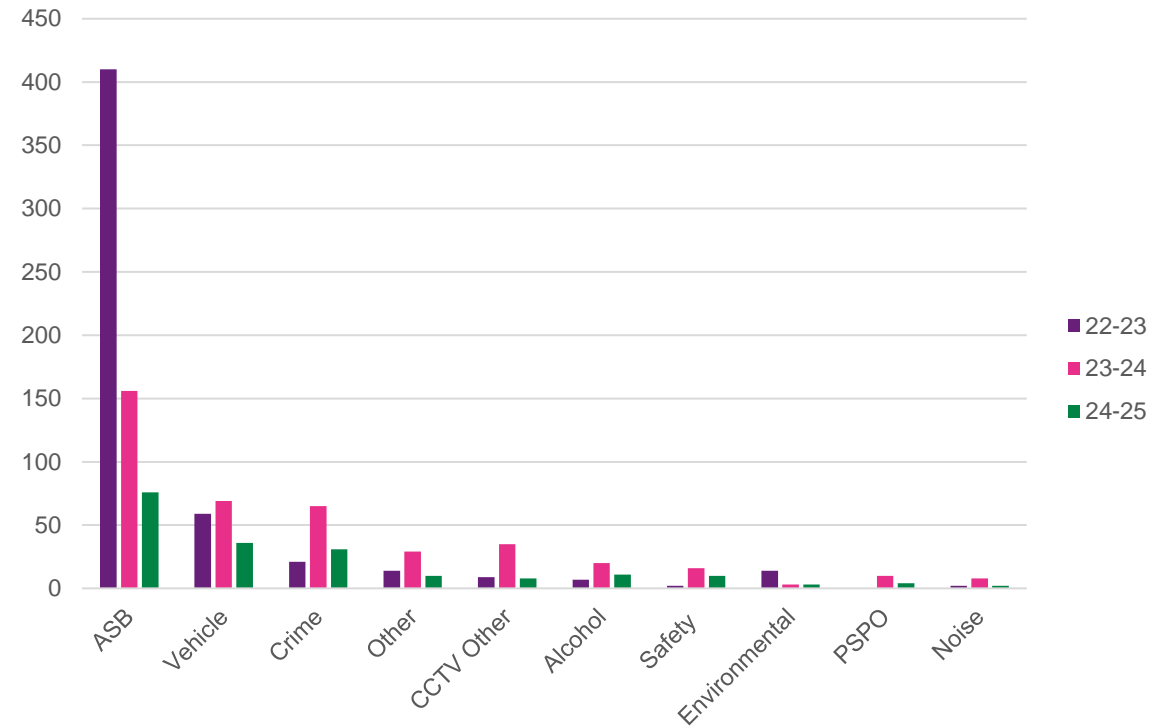
# Establish the key issues

## Norton

Biggest reported issue to SBC is antisocial behaviour, peaking at over 400 in 22/23, dropping to 150 last year following the introduction of a PSPO.

Concerns regarding off road motorbikes high.

ASB Hot Spot patrol routes have recently been reviewed and Norton TC will form part of the revised patrol routes.



# What is already in place?

## Licensing

Licensing Service is a team of 9 including Admin and Licensing Officers. The team deal with 50+ pieces of legislation dating from 1847 – 2023. The core functions of the licensing services is to ensure public safety through licensing policies and documents to promote the licensing objectives throughout the Borough. Licensing Officers carry out both proactive and reactive visits and investigate and take action against licenced and unlicenced activity to promote public safety.

The team process around 2000 applications and 1000 service requests per year.

Pubwatch – There are five pub watch groups across the Borough, Stockton Town Centre, Yarm, Billingham, Thornaby & Estates and Norton & Estates. Using Serious Violence funding (CURV), we now have Pubwatch radios, with contact into SBC Control Room.

Town Centre Audits – Licensing officers contribute to regular audits organised by Town Centre

# What is already in place?

## Licensing

Trauma Packs are now in key locations and licensed premises, designed to improve the chances of victims in the event of a serious accident or a violent incident. These have been purchased using Serious Violence funding secured via the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Trauma Packs consist of bandages and packing with simple instructions, designed to be used by lay persons in cases of serious injuries sustained in a wide range of circumstances such as an accident resulting in an injury.





# What is already in place?

## Trading Standards

Trading Standards works to promote a fair and safe trading environment, to the benefit of both consumers and reputable businesses. Trading Standards Officers will investigate all complaints regarding the sale of such products from town centre premises and market traders.

Operation CeCe to combat the sale of counterfeit and illicit tobacco, has involved significant work in and around town centre locations, particularly in Stockton. One recent raid at a town centre premises under warrant with the Police, led to the seizure of 32,660 cigarettes and almost 11kg of hand rolling tobacco. In the last 6 months alone, 5 town centre premises in Stockton, involved in the sale of counterfeit and illicit tobacco, have been closed.



# What is already in place?

## Trading Standards

Operation Joseph involves work to combat the sale of illicit and non-compliant vaping products. Over 1500 illegal vapes hidden within 2 separate concealments, were recently seized from a town centre premises. This premises was subsequently issued with a 3-month closure order.

Trading Standards Officers carry out proactive food standards inspections to check that town centre premises are selling food that is correctly described and meets compositional standards, as well as ensuring that the requirements around allergen controls are being implemented.

Trading Standards will also utilise the help of young volunteers to check if shops are selling age restricted products, such as cigarettes, alcohol, vapes and fireworks, to children. A lot of this work is carried out within the Borough's town centre locations.

# What is already in place?

## Environmental Health

Env Health address issues for dog fouling in any area of the borough and also undertake a statutory role for animals which are not kept under control.

Air quality monitoring is undertaken (both real-time and passive) at locations across the borough and in proximity to the town centres which aids in addressing future local AQ issues (Planning).

Noise, dust and odour are addressed by Environmental Health in terms of our role as a statutory consultee to Licensing and also via statutory nuisance assessments and control.

Development controls are added by Env Health for any new development including the town centre development which addresses local noise concerns and binds developers to the use of best available technique during demolition and construction phases of any give development.

# What is already in place?

## Environmental Health

Food safety controls in the borough are addressed by both premises inspections, complaints management and through both reactive and proactive sampling being undertaken.

Despite the backlog created during the pandemic Env. Health Commercial Officers have addressed this and hold a 100% inspection rate for all food safety categories within the borough and town centres.

Objective FSO1a - Food Hygiene Intervention Plan 2024 - 2025			
Premises Rating Category	Minimum Intervention Frequency	Number of premises due an intervention	Intervention Target
A	6 months	1	100%
B	12 months	27	100%
C	18 months	117	100%
D	24 months	669	100%
E	36 months	606	100%
Unrated	-	15	100%

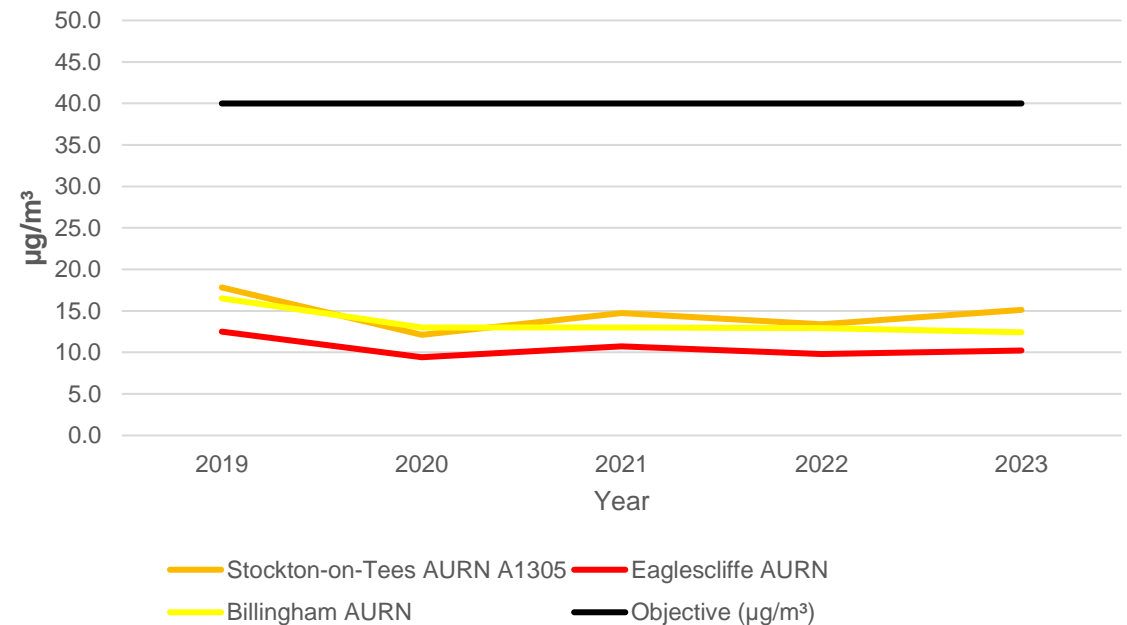
# What is already in place?

## Environmental Health

Stockton-on-Tees has a population of approximately 200,000 residents. Vehicle traffic is the main contributor towards air pollution within Stockton-on-Tees. Stockton-on-Tees has two major roads; the A19 which runs North and South and the A66 which runs East and West

As with most other Boroughs throughout the country there are roads within town centres which become busy at peak traffic times, roads which serve industrial estates which are used more frequently by heavy goods vehicles and roads which serve outlining villages and estates which are typically quieter and less congested.

Trends In Annual Mean NO<sub>2</sub> Concentrations At AURN Stations

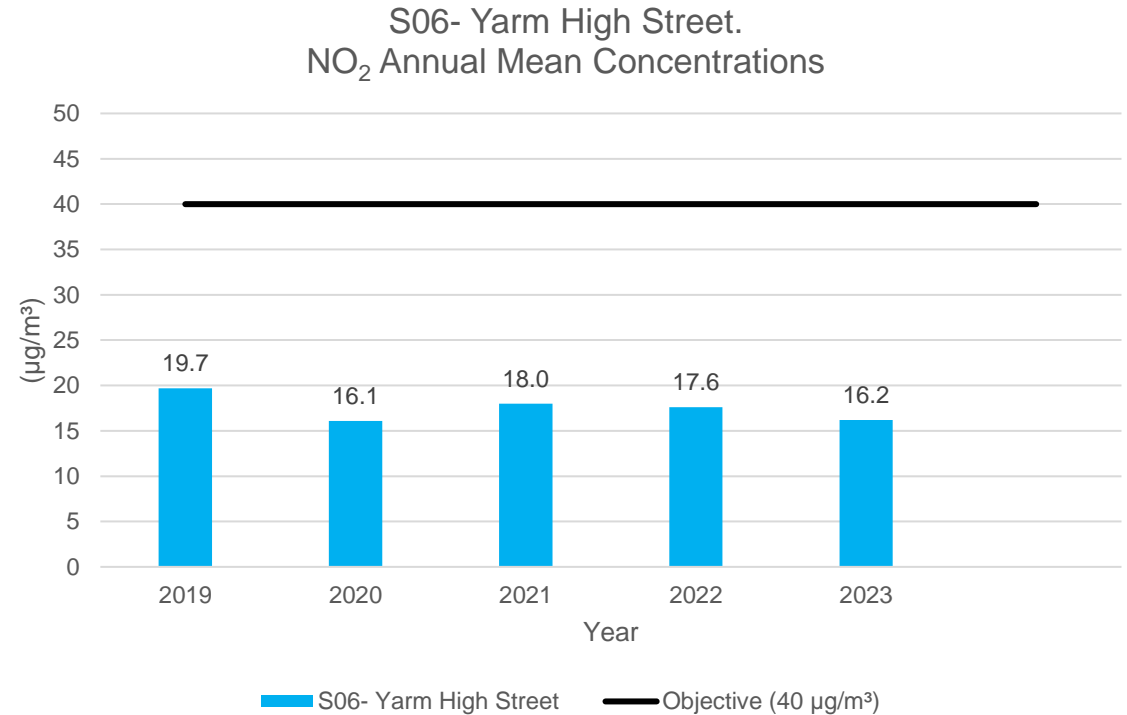


# What is already in place?

## Environmental Health

The Council meets with its local monitoring requirements year on year and the overall trends for air quality shows a slow decline each year for pollutants of concern.

To further capitalise on this EH have developed anti idling signage, will be implementing idling patrols circa October 2024, have worked and continue to work with local Primary Schools and are currently in the process of developing a borough wide air quality policy which will set out a vast number of current and further controls to improve local air quality.



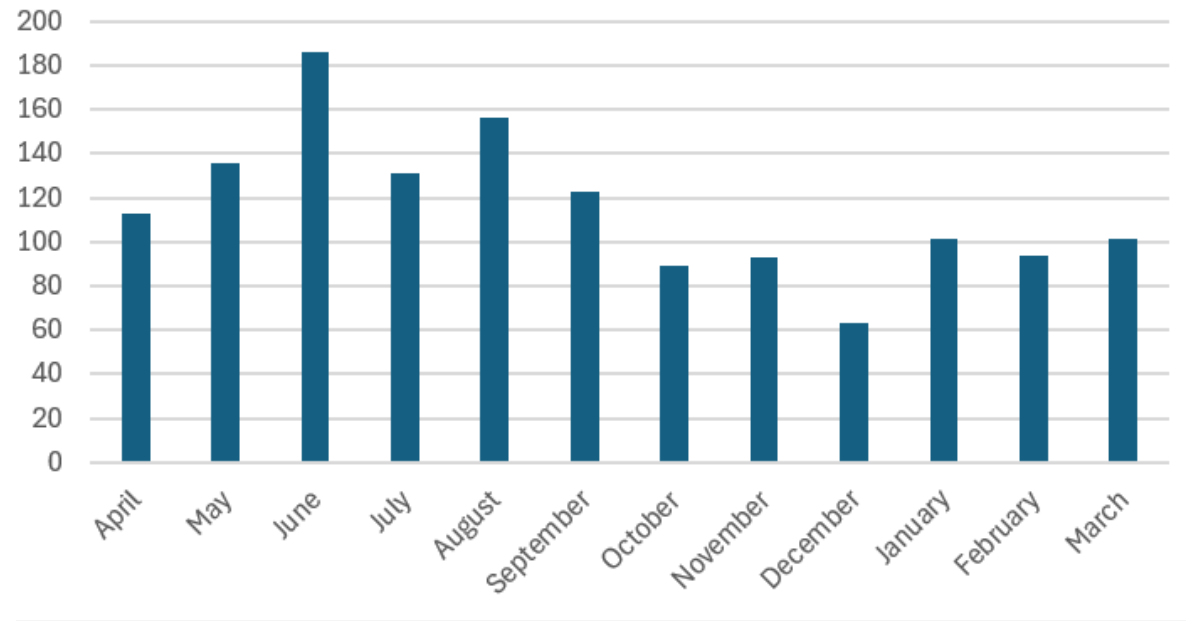
# What is already in place?

## Environmental Health

Noise issues impact on all residents but more so in developed town centres.

EH address all noise complaints in the borough by either designing them out at Planning or Licensing application stage and where businesses fail to maintain these standards through detailed investigation and acoustic monitoring.

Noise Complaints Addressed 2023/24



# Powering our Future

## Community Safety and Regulated Services

Review currently on going and expected to be concluded this year with recommendations to Cabinet.

Review focused on:

- Having the correct team structures to meet future demand
- Improvement in digital innovation to maximise officer time in the community
- Improve customer access and experience including reporting and updates





# Next Steps

## Priorities for 2024

- Introduction of a Problem Solving and Partnerships officer to work alongside the community and internal and external partners to enhance community resilience and exploit opportunities for collaboration. They will be able to support grass roots community groups in developing their own funding bids and initiatives, enhancing community resilience and autonomy.
- Evaluation and review of PSPO in Stockton and Norton. Using information and intelligence to inform further use of our powers to ensure our communities are protected.
- Strengthening Case Management and Problem Solving capability and partnership working across departments and externally.
- Developing the work we have been doing using SS5 funding in Town Centre Ward.
- Using Immediate Justice (Making Good) referrals to further effect, diverting young people away from ASB.
- Maximising use of civil legislation, sharing information internally and externally to use the most appropriate power to disrupt crime, particularly serious and organised crime.
- Support the development and regeneration of our town centres to ensure they are welcoming places to visit

# Role of Safer Stockton Partnership



Safer Stockton Partnership does:

- Sets a strategic plan to identify and tackle key community safety issues in Stockton on Tees.
- Monitors progress and performance in relation to harm reduction and perceptions of safety
- Act as a critical friend for proposals and initiatives with all partners.
- Bring together key statutory stakeholders and partners to deliver plans.
- Provides an overarching view of key strategies that impact this area of business.
- Responsible for setting a strategy and action plan to tackle serious violence.

Any Questions?

