

Community Safety Select Committee
Review of Welcoming and Safe Town Centres
Outline Scope

Scrutiny Chair (Project Director): Cllr Paul Rowling	Contact details: paul.rowling@stockton.gov.uk
Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager): Gary Woods	Contact details: gary.woods@stockton.gov.uk 01642 526187
Departmental Link Officer: Sharon Cooney (SBC Head of Community Safety)	Contact details: sharon.cooney@stockton.gov.uk

<p>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</p> <p>The review will contribute to all three of the Council Plan 2023-2026 key objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm</i> • <i>A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed</i> • <i>A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive</i>

<p>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</p> <p>For several years now, debate has ensued over the future purpose and provision of town centres across the UK, with Local Authorities and their numerous partners considering the ways in which they can make these locations as appealing as possible within the context of a tough financial landscape. In related matters, the issue of town centre safety has drawn recent national attention, with significant concerns raised around reported increases in shoplifting, rising incidences of violence and abuse of shop staff, and police / community support officer numbers (UK Parliament - Town Centre Safety (Dec 23)).</p> <p>As Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) progresses with the redevelopment of its six town centres, fostering feelings of safety and creating welcoming spaces are crucial for several reasons. A safe environment encourages residents and visitors to engage in activities, boosting economic vitality through increased footfall and business opportunities. A welcoming town centre also promotes community cohesion and pride, attracting investment but also encouraging a sense of belonging amongst residents. Cultivating and developing a positive perception of the Borough's town centres is an essential component of the Council's regeneration strategy.</p> <p>Over recent years, a significant amount of work has gone into supporting Stockton-on-Tees town centres, both from a regeneration investment perspective and a community safety standpoint. A substantial amount of investment has been made in community safety measures such as new CCTV cameras and the provision of additional Civic Enforcement Officers to patrol and work with key stakeholders to problem-solve issues. Furthermore, last year saw the introduction of the Council's first Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to tackle aggressive begging and street drinking in both Stockton Town Centre and Norton Village.</p>
--

These measures, alongside additional support from SBCs strategic partners, have resulted in sustained reductions in key areas of crime and disorder. Despite this, however, the public perception of town centre safety continues to be poor amongst prospective visitors and also commercial investors.

This review provides an opportunity to scrutinise what is currently in place in terms of promoting safety in town centres and how effective the measures are in addressing crime and disorder, whilst also further exploring what more can be done to positively promote the Borough's town centre spaces to address negative perceptions and improve feelings of safety.

The main aims for this review will be to:

- 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.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

What is meant by the term 'welcoming' in relation to the Borough's town centres?

What has the Council and its partners done to make its town centres more welcoming and safer (inc. impact of recent PSPO implementation)? How effective have these been?

What safety issues (real or perceived) are specific to the six town centres across the Borough; what is stopping residents / visitors wanting to access these locations? What data is available to support / contradict these concerns?

Do town centre businesses consider their location as welcoming and safe? What issues, if any, do they feel need addressing; could they assist with any of these themselves?

How is the grant funding allocated to the Cleveland PCC area as part of the latest Safer Streets Fund (round five) being used to improve safety within the Borough?

What is the role of the Stockton Safety Partnership (SSP) in relation to this scrutiny topic?

How can this review contribute to / complement the ongoing SBC *Powering Our Future* Community Safety and Regulated Services project?

How does / can the Council utilise the local voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to support welcoming and safe town centres?

What can the Council learn from the approach of other Local Authorities?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Council, Cabinet, SBC partners, businesses, public.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

7 months (report to Cabinet in February 2025)

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- Local Government Association (LGA): Revitalising town centres (May 18)
- Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP): Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Strategy 2022-2025
- GOV.UK: Safer Streets Fund (Oct 23)

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Safety and Regulated Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Issues being highlighted for each town centre ➤ Safety initiatives implemented and the impact ➤ Role of SSP in this scrutiny topic |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Influencing community safety / violence prevention |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centres Development • Inclusive Growth and Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Plans for / progress on town centre investment and making these spaces welcoming / safe |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward Councillors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from public |

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland

- Town centre priorities / plans
- Safer Streets Fund – impact within Borough

Cleveland Police
Cleveland Fire Authority / Brigade

- Town centre crime / disorder data
- Safety initiatives implemented and the impact
- Past / future partnership-working with SBC

Town Councils
Business Forums / Groups

- Issues regarding town centre safety and measures taken to address these
- Past / future partnership-working with SBC

Catalyst / VCSE Sector

- Existing VCSE involvement
- How the VCSE could further support efforts

Residents / Communities

- Views on / barriers to accessing town centres

Other Local Authority Areas

- Initiatives to improve views of town centres and / or tackle negative perceptions

How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)

Committee meetings, reports, research, existing public feedback, site visits (TBC).

<p>How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?</p> <p>Committee meetings, information submissions.</p>
<p>How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p> <p>The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.</p>
<p>How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?</p> <p><u>Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): Crime:</u> Crime and the fear of crime are key factors that affect people's quality of life and sense of wellbeing.</p> <p><u>Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023: All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places and sustainable communities:</u> Health and wellbeing are influenced by the environment in which people grow up, live, work and spend their leisure time and by how safe people feel in their communities.</p>
<p>Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:</p> <p>An assessment of the effectiveness of local community safety measures and recommendations on what more could potentially be done to address public concerns (whether real or perceived).</p>

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	May 2024	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	29.05.24	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	13.06.24	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	TBC	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	SBC Community Safety and Regulated Services	11.07.24	Select Committee
	SBC Town Centres Dev. SBC Public Health / CGL	26.09.24	
	Office of the PCC Cleveland Police	24.10.24	
	Cleveland Fire Brigade Town Councils	28.11.24	
	Business Forums / Groups	09.01.25	
	Catalyst / VCSE Sector Other Local Authorities	23.01.25	
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	27.02.25	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	March 2025	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	27.03.25	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	[20.05.25]	Executive Scrutiny Committee

Report to Cabinet / Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	17.04.25	Cabinet / Approving Body
---	---	-----------------	--------------------------