

**Stockton Business Improvement District (BID) Report  
Presented to the Community Safety Select Committee  
Date: January 9, 2025  
Subject: Welcoming and Safe Stockton Town Centre**

## **A Safe and Welcoming Stockton Town Centre**

At Stockton BID, part of our mission is to make the town centre a space where everyone feels safe, welcomed, and inspired to visit. Over the past year, we've worked tirelessly with businesses, community members, and the local council to achieve this goal. In this report, we reflect on the current challenges and share the progress we've made in creating a vibrant, thriving Stockton town centre.

## **The Challenges We Face**

### **Anti-Social Behaviour and Safety Concerns**

Reports of anti-social behaviour, theft, and public nuisance remain persistent issues in Stockton town centre. Businesses frequently share concerns about individuals living with addiction using public spaces inappropriately, leaving needles, and engaging in disruptive behaviour. These incidents negatively impact public perception, creating a sense of unease for visitors and affecting footfall.

In 2024 alone, we recorded 651 incidents, including shoplifting and theft, with hotspots such as Wellington Square seeing repeated high-value losses. Violence, though less frequent, remains a concern, with 2.92% of incidents involving physical assaults on staff. These issues directly affect the morale of business owners and employees, further compounding the challenge of creating a welcoming environment.

## **Our Initiatives to Address Safety**

### **Enforcement Officers**

Our enforcement officers play a critical role in maintaining order and cleanliness within the town centre. Despite facing significant adversity, they work tirelessly to address anti-social behaviour, littering, fly-tipping, and the ongoing challenge of illegal parking, particularly around Dovecote Street. Their efforts are vital in creating a safer, more organised environment for visitors and businesses alike.

### **Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP)**

We've made significant strides through the introduction of the Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP). By implementing the Sentrysis reporting system, we've enabled businesses to efficiently log incidents, creating a centralized approach to tackling crime. Additionally, over 20 radios have been distributed to businesses, improving communication and real-time response to issues. To support night-time economy businesses, we've funded their membership to the Shop Watch scheme, ensuring they have the tools they need to operate safely.

## **Collaborative Efforts to Tackle ASB**

Initially, the rollout of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) brought a noticeable improvement, but long-term solutions are essential. We emphasise compassionate approaches to addressing addiction-related behaviours, advocating for strategies that go beyond enforcement and work towards integration and support.

## **Street Angels Initiative**

In partnership with funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Stockton BID launched the Street Angels initiative. This program provides on-the-ground support to individuals in the town centre, enhancing safety while fostering a sense of community care. The Street Angels not only assist in immediate safety concerns but also act as a welcoming presence for visitors.

## **Insights from the Sentrysis Report**

- Total Incidents (2024): 651, covering a range of issues including theft (121 shoplifting incidents), anti-social behaviour, and aggressive behaviour.
- Police Involvement: Only 3.1% of incidents involved police intervention, highlighting the burden placed on businesses and local systems.
- Offender Profiles
- 332 offenders were added to the database in 2024, with 223 identified as male and 93 as female.
- A significant proportion of offenders remain of unknown age, indicating gaps in profiling and potential challenges in targeted interventions.
- Seasonal Trends: Peaks in incidents occurred between March and May, with the highest monthly total of 140 in May.
- Economic Impact: Businesses experienced over £10,000 in losses due to unrecovered thefts.
- Hotspots: Wellington Square remains a focal point for safety concerns, accounting for the majority of high-value theft and aggressive behaviour reports.
- The system can be further enhanced by Police allowing integration into their own systems meaning reports can immediately be turned in crime reports meaning only needing to report an incident once as in other areas such as Durham where this had been rolled out successfully.

## **Positive Developments in Stockton Town Centre**

While challenges persist, Stockton Town Centre continues to thrive in many areas:

- Business Growth: Independent businesses remain a cornerstone of the town's economy, with many showing consistent growth and success. Their unique offerings enhance the town's appeal and create a sense of community pride.
- Events and Festivals: The town regularly hosts vibrant events and festivals that bring colour, art, and culture to Stockton. These events not only boost footfall but also foster a sense of community and celebration.
- Regeneration Projects: The ongoing regeneration work is transforming the town centre, making it an even more attractive and functional space for visitors, businesses, and

residents alike. These projects demonstrate a commitment to Stockton's future and its role as a thriving hub of activity.

## **Working with Stockton Borough Council**

We are proud of our collaborative relationship with Stockton Borough Council. Together, we've implemented critical safety measures such as enhanced CCTV coverage and enforcement actions. However, challenges remain, particularly around resource limitations and securing funding to tackle systemic issues like addiction and negative public perception.

## **Looking Ahead: Our Recommendations**

To create a truly welcoming and safe Stockton town centre, we propose the following actions:

1. **Expand Crime Prevention Efforts:**
  - Increase engagement resources and provide additional training for businesses to address safety concerns.
2. **Promote Compassionate Solutions:**
  - Advocate for respectful language and policies surrounding individuals living with addiction.
  - Partner with MPs and social organizations to develop inclusive support systems.
  - Challenge local MPs to lead efforts in changing public language about addiction, like the positive changes in how society now addresses racism, sexism, and the LGBTQ+ community. This shift can foster public compassion, dispel false narratives, and encourage constructive conversations about addiction.
3. **Boost Public Perception:**
  - Launch a public awareness campaign showcasing Stockton's progress and successes.
  - Highlight the town's thriving independent businesses, cultural events, and regeneration efforts to create a balanced narrative.
4. **Secure Strategic Funding:**
  - Collaborate with SBC and external partners to identify funding opportunities for safety initiatives and community engagement.

## **Conclusion**

Stockton BID is unwavering in its dedication to creating a safe and welcoming town center. Through collaboration with Stockton Borough Council, local businesses, and community stakeholders, we aim to overcome challenges and transform Stockton into a thriving hub for commerce and culture. With ongoing focus and investment, we can achieve a town center that attracts visitors, inspires residents, and supports a thriving local economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this report. We look forward to continuing our partnership to make Stockton Town Centre the best it can be.

*Prepared by: Jason Maxwell, Stockton BID Manager*