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Dorset PCC Warns Against Shoplifting as Police Pledge Action

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Retail crime in Dorset is under renewed focus as Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) David Sidwick reiterated that shoplifting will not be tolerated. His firm statement comes amid ongoing efforts to combat theft and protect local businesses, which he says are directly harmed by such offences.

“These crimes impact all of us, and I thoroughly dismiss any notion that retail crime is victimless,” Sidwick said. “It has a big impact on the people who work in the affected businesses and the customers who use them.”

Since taking office, Sidwick has prioritised tackling retail crime and violence against shop workers in his policing strategy. He said that listening to business owners and frontline retail staff helped shape his approach and confirmed the need for visible and meaningful action.

Strong Local Partnerships

A key development has been the Dorset Safer Business Partnership, which was created in 2021. The initiative brings together Dorset Police, the PCC's office, and business leaders to focus on four main goals: prevention, reporting, engagement, and fraud reduction. Sidwick believes this joined-up approach has improved communication and led to more tailored solutions for businesses.

"I firmly believe positive collaboration is key to tackling shoplifting and this partnership brings together experts and local voices to ensure business leaders are rightly at the centre of the work taking place," he said.

The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Business Crime Reduction Partnership is another initiative Sidwick credits with helping prevent theft and support local retailers. This collaborative network includes several business improvement districts working to deter repeat offenders and make the area more resilient.

Dorset Police's enforcement strategy is led by Operation Shopkeeper, which targets prolific offenders responsible for the bulk of retail theft. Since November 2023, the operation has dealt with 33 offenders, leading to over 800 positive outcomes for victims and more than 21 years of combined prison sentences.

"I want to be clear, this work is achieving some fantastic results, not only locking up offenders but also using civil and banning orders, meaning offenders cannot return to the areas they have previously targeted, and if they do, they will be dealt with robustly," Sidwick said.

Neighbourhood policing teams have supported the operation with increased patrols in theft hotspots, the use of plainclothes officers, and long-term engagement with businesses. Sidwick said these combined efforts show that the police are committed to enforcement and restoring confidence across Dorset's communities.

He ended his statement by calling on residents and retailers to stay active in reporting offences. “Our message is very clear; shoplifting is not acceptable, and we will not tolerate it in Dorset. Wherever possible, the force will act when these offences occur, so please keep reporting and help to keep our area one of the safest in the county.”

Dorset’s PCC’s message is clear and uncompromising: retail crime is taken seriously, and offenders will be pursued with full force.