

REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 25 September 2025

Report of: Strategic Director Place, Ian Collinson

Title: Update on efforts to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour in the City Centre

Is this a Key Decision?

Scrutiny is a non-decision making committee

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Scrutiny is a non-decision making committee

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 Key priorities in the new Corporate Plan include, a safe and thriving night-time economy and a safe and thriving city with great things to see and do for everyone. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is one of the ways of ensuring people feel safe and welcome, in the city centre and across neighbourhoods.
- 1.2 This work supports the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which takes a multi-organisational approach to ASB.
- 1.3 Cllr Mitchell and Cllr Palmer submitted a proposal for the following to be considered by Customer Focus Scrutiny:
 - Address public concern about the impact of anti-social behaviour in the City Centre; its causes and possible solutions;
 - Multi agency input to understand the nature of the issues that arise, the causations and potential solutions;
 - Several organisations to be invited with the brief to provide a short statement on what they believe from their evidence are the causes and possible solutions to ASB in the city centre.
- 1.4 In relation to the proposal, comments from SMB were: Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in the City Centre (and throughout Exeter) is a City Council priority and is addressed through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). This includes participation in an ASB sub-group of the CSP. Officers would be pleased to provide the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee with a report, updating actions and initiatives to tackle this issue, including our Community Safety Team who work in partnership with Hot Spot policing.
- 1.5 The Chair of the Community Safety Partnership's ASB Sub-Group will provide a summary of work undertaken to address City Centre ASB.

2. What are the legal aspects?

- 2.1 The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 gives councils the authority to draft and implement Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in response to

issues affecting communities. On 10 June 2025, the City Council extended the City Centre PSPO for a further 3 years until 19 June 2028.

- 2.2 These powers are subject to several conditions. The first condition is that activities carried on in a public place within the authority's area have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life in the locality; or it is likely that activities will be carried on in a public place within that area and that they will have such an effect.
- 2.3 The second condition is that the effect or the likely effect of the activities;
- a) is, or is likely to be of a persistent nature;
 - b) is, or is likely to be, such as to make the activities unreasonable; and
 - c) justifies the restrictions imposed by the notice.
- 2.4 If ASB occurs within the boundary of the PSPO, it provides powers to:
- A. Surrender any intoxicating substance* in their possession to an authorised person** when requested to do so by that authorised person, if:
 - (a) They are found to be ingesting, inhaling, injecting, smoking or otherwise using an intoxicating substance or substances; or
 - (b) They are in possession of such intoxicating substance or substances with the intent of using such intoxicating substance within this area; or
 - (c) The authorised person has reasonable grounds to believe that such person is using or intends to use the intoxicating substance or substances within the said area.
 - B. Not urinate in a street or public open space.
 - C. Not carry out aggressive begging.
 - D. Not behave (either individually or in a group of two or more people) in a manner that has caused or is likely to cause a member of the public to suffer harassment, alarm or distress by that behaviour.
 - E. Person or persons within this area who breach Prohibition D shall when ordered to do so by an authorised person leave the area either immediately or by such time as may be specified and in such a manner as may be specified.
- 2.5 Also, at the disposal of designated city institutions is the ability to issue several notices, which include:
- Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC), which is a written agreement widely used to address ASB undertaken by young people;
 - Community Protection Warning (CPW), which is a written warning issued to individuals, businesses, or organisations to modify a pattern of behaviour that is negatively impacting the local community's quality of life;
 - When a Community Protection Warning is breached, the next stage is to issue the offending person/ business with a Community Protection Notice (CPN);
 - If persistent ASB is still occurring, the next stage is a Criminal Behaviour Order, which is issued by a court.

3. Report details:

- 3.1 During 2020 an Anti-Social Behaviour Summit was held, bringing together city partners. The summit was designed and delivered, with support from the University of Exeter to develop a report, with included the following objectives:
- Objective 1: Identifying and describing changes that have taken place since the Summit, including those brought about by the COVID pandemic
 - Objective 2: Identify key themes and recommendations for short, medium and long-term actions that are both preventative and responsive
 - Objective 3: Ensuring that people with lived experience can contribute to the formation of recommendations
 - Objective 4: Prepare for a Review Summit in the autumn where delegates will be invited to set priorities; identify resources and agree action plans
- 3.2 The report, its objectives and any outstanding actions are being addressed by the Community Safety Partnership ASB Sub-Group and the ASBAT Operational Sub-Working Group.
- 3.3 During the 2024 Council restructure, the Head of City Centre & Net Zero took on the responsibility for City Centre ASB, with wider city wide ASB falling under the Head of Service Environment & Waste.
- 3.4 The following organisations have been invited to present to Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee on the causes and solutions of City centre ASB, as well as activity undertaken by their respective organisation:
- The Community Safety Partnership (Safer Exeter) ASB Operational Sub-Group
 - Inclusive Exeter
 - Exeter College
 - Intercom Trust
 - Exeter Mosque
 - Co-Lab
 - University of Exeter
 - St Petrock's
 - Exeter City Community Trust
 - Taxi Drivers
 - Together Devon
- 3.5 No one organisation can solve City Centre ASB, but collectively they can make a positive contribution. Organisations are working in partnership through the ASB Sub-Group, chaired by InExeter. The Sub-Group has led on the development of hyper local ASB action plans for Fore Street, Cathedral Green, South Street and Sidwell Street. Activity is being drawn into a City Centre ASB Action Plan.
- 3.6 Addressing City Centre ASB in partnership, supports the results of the 2024 residents survey, as safety was highlighted as an area of concern:

- Safety was the number one suggested improvement for the youngest category (16–24-year-olds)
- Respondents were asked to suggest one thing that would improve life for themselves and their family - safety was the most popular.
- Analysis of the survey showed that those living in Central wards were more likely to feel unsafe outside after dark, particularly when compared with those in the South area.
- Deprivation levels seem to be a factor in feelings of safety too, with those in areas of higher deprivation more likely to feel unsafe than those in areas of lower deprivation.
- Females were also more likely to feel unsafe outside after dark than males.
- Nine in ten respondents felt safe outside in their local area during the day and this was on a par with the national picture, with 91% reporting they felt safe during the day in the LGA residents benchmarking survey.
- Although six in ten (59%) said they felt safe outside in the local area after dark, a quarter did not, with 17% saying they felt 'fairly unsafe' and 9% 'very unsafe'. This is higher than in the LGA residents benchmarking survey, which found 16% felt unsafe in their local area after dark.

3.7 As part of the Government's Safer Streets Mission, the Prime Minister has recently announced details of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, aimed at restoring and strengthening local policing in every community by the end of this Parliament. A key component of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee is restoring confidence in local communities and taking visible action tackling ASB and increasing the safety of town centres and high streets. The government has written to all Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables about ensuring every area is maximising all opportunities, including taking forward immediate steps this summer, in partnership with councils, schools, health services, business, transport and community organisations.

Report Author: Head of City Centre & Net Zero

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report: - None

Contact for enquires: Democratic Services (Committees), Room 4.36 Tel: 01392 265275