Police & Crime Panel – November 2026
Retail Crime

At its last meeting, the Panel requested an update report from the Commissioner on retail crime.

Tackling retail crime is a central pillar of the Police and Crime Plan. The Commissioner has set clear commitments to tackle retail crime and support retailers across Hertfordshire:

- Improve reporting of retail crime
- Strengthen crime prevention
- Target prolific offenders
- Work in partnership with retailers and the police

Performance

Significant progress has been made by Hertfordshire Constabulary to improve the response to shoplifting offences.

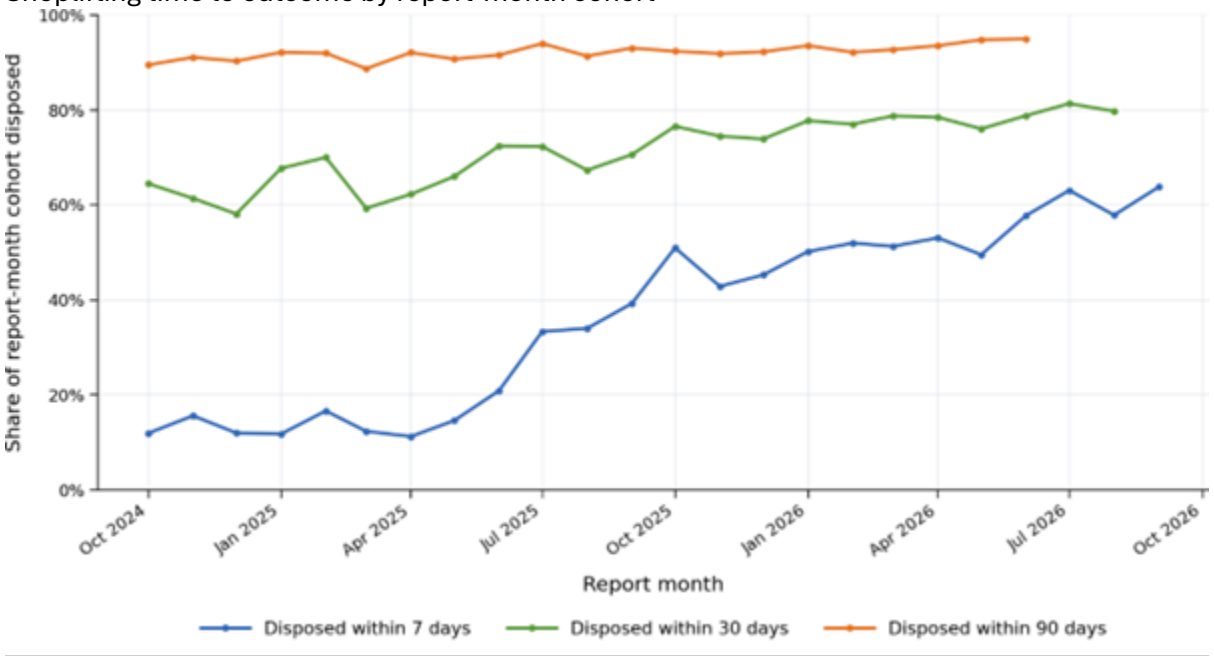
Over the last two years, the solved rate has broadly doubled, with close to a third of retail crime offences now being solved.

Shoplifting solved rate over time



Shoplifting investigations are also reaching outcomes substantially faster, particularly within the first seven and 30 days. By August 2026, approximately 63% of eligible shoplifting reports were resolved within seven days, while 85% of the July cohort were resolved within 30 days.

Shoplifting time to outcome by report-month cohort



The following factors have likely contributed to this improvement in performance:

- Operation Retail enables officers to progress suitable shoplifting cases without using custody unnecessarily, reducing demand and risk. Where there is overwhelming evidence of guilt and the specified criteria are met, a suspect can be charged or summonsed without arrest or interview.
- Reporting systems such as Auror are making it easier for retailers to report offences. The roll out of Shopsafe Alert will extend this to independent and smaller retailers.
- Stronger communication and engagement have increased retailers' confidence that reported crimes will receive an appropriate police response.

Improve reporting of retail crime

Auror

Auror was launched across Hertfordshire Constabulary in April 2026, enabling participating larger retailers to report non-violent retail crime directly to police and provide key evidence, including CCTV, offender images and witness statements.

Auror has already supported significant investigations. Information gathered through the platform assisted an investigation into 43 thefts from Boots stores involving around £190,000 of stolen stock, resulting in two men being charged with conspiracy to commit theft.

The Commissioner has provided grant funding to support overtime funding for officers to have dedicated time to review Auror reports and investigations. By October, this work had reviewed 194 Auror reports and 109 investigations, identified 86 suspects and generated further investigations, arrest packages and evidential opportunities. A further £10,000 has been approved by the Commissioner to continue this work for another three months.

ShopSafe Alert
The PCC-funded ShopSafe Alert pilot launched in April 2026, initially focusing on Bishop's Stortford, Welwyn Garden City, St Albans and the Roaring Meg retail park in Stevenage.

ShopSafe gives retailers, particularly smaller and independent businesses, a simple way to share information about offenders and suspicious activity and strengthen communication with local policing teams.

The programme is now being expanded, with rollout underway in Harpenden and Waltham Cross, alongside the existing pilot areas. Work is also progressing towards a managed retail crime intelligence service.

The next phase will explore direct reporting to police through ShopSafe, including the submission of CCTV and witness statements. This is intended to build on the learning from Auror and provide retailers with a more efficient route for reporting retail crime.
Strengthen crime prevention

To help independent retailers prevent crime, the OPCC piloted a retail crime prevention grant scheme. This consisted of two key elements. Firstly, the Constabulary's crime prevention team carried out an environmental audit of business premises to identify potential security improvements. Retailers could then apply for OPCC funding to implement the recommendations.

The scheme was piloted in Harpenden and Waltham Cross, where the crime prevention team completed environmental audits for eight and nine businesses respectively. The team's main recommendation was to provide businesses with access to the ShopSafe Alert app, which we are now launching in both areas.

Target prolific offenders

The Commissioner has funded a £60,000 Navigator project to address prolific shoplifting. Delivered by HACRO, the pilot will focus on prolific shoplifters in St Albans, complementing enforcement by addressing factors that can drive repeat offending, including substance misuse, housing instability and wellbeing.

Participants will receive intensive one-to-one support to help them engage with appropriate treatment and support services. The aim is to reduce repeat offending and the demand prolific offenders place on retailers, policing and the wider criminal justice system.

Previous analysis found that one in three shoplifting offences involved the same named suspect, demonstrating the importance of combining effective enforcement with targeted work to reduce reoffending.

Similar projects in Hampshire have delivered significant reductions in reoffending from the Navigator approach.

Improve partnership working

Herts Against Retail Crime Partnership Board

The Commissioner established the Herts Against Retail Crime Partnership Board in 2025, bringing together retailers, business groups and the police to tackle retail crime. The board followed the first Retail Crime Forum in July 2025 and was created to strengthen collaboration.

The board meets quarterly and includes representatives from across the retail sector, including major retailers such as Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Co-op, as well as Business Improvement Districts. Hertfordshire Constabulary's retail crime lead also attends to provide operational updates and respond to retailers' questions and concerns.

The board has helped us strengthen our engagement with retailers. For example, when the police identify issues at specific stores, we can escalate them to the relevant retailer representatives and work together to address concerns. Two examples of this include:

- The local policing team in Rickmansworth told us that a local Marks & Spencer store was having difficulty uploading CCTV footage to Auror. The OPCC raised the issue with a Marks & Spencer representative, who agreed to engage directly with the relevant store managers. Working with the Constabulary, the OPCC held a briefing for regional managers to strengthen links and improve reporting to the police.

- It was identified that Greggs stores in Hertfordshire were reporting shoplifting offences but had a low solved outcome rate. The Commissioner and the Constabulary's retail crime lead met with Greggs to discuss the concerns and agree how to improve outcomes. Following this targeted engagement, Greggs now has the second-highest solved outcome rate among retailers in the county.

We will continue to work the Herts Against Retail Crime Board into the next year and will seek to further strengthen our collaboration between retailers and the police.

Retail Crime Forum
The annual Retail Crime Partnership Event brings together retailers, Hertfordshire Constabulary, the OPCC and key partners to strengthen the collective response to retail crime. The event provides an opportunity to hear from the Commissioner and Chief Constable and receive updates on policing activity and key initiatives, including Auror, ShopSafe Alert and Local Facial Recognition (LFR), with LFR vans available on site to demonstrate the technology in practice. HACRO also provides an update on its work with prolific offenders through the Navigator programme. The event supports closer working between policing and the retail sector, ensures businesses understand the tools and support available to them, and provides an opportunity for retailers to help shape the response to retail crime.

A joined-up approach
Together, Auror, ShopSafe Alert and Navigator strengthen Hertfordshire's wider response to retail crime.

They provide a complementary approach: improving the quality of information and evidence received from retailers, strengthening intelligence sharing and enforcement, and addressing the behaviour of prolific offenders.

This reflects the strong partnership between the Commissioner, Hertfordshire Constabulary, retailers and local partners, with investment focused on practical initiatives that protect businesses, improve the police response and reduce repeat offending.