

PACT Meeting 8 January 2026 – Informal Notes

These informal notes focus on some of the main items but do not include all items. Apologies for any errors, not everything was captured and some aspects might have been misheard due to noise and disruption.

Attendees:

- All three Portswood Ward Councillors
- At least 4 HRA WhatsApp Group members
- Two representatives from the University of Southampton:

Professor Jane Falkingham, Responsible for their Civic Agenda, and
The University Head of Security

- An audience of approximately 50-60

Apologies:

Barbara Claridge, HRA HonSec

6 HRA WhatsApp Group Members

On the Panel:

Francesca Prior, Service Manager, Safer Communities (Community Safety)

Cllr Alex Winning, Leader of the Council

PC Adam O'Neill, Dedicated Neighbourhood Police Officer, Southampton North
Neighbourhood Policing Team

Alex Charge, District Commander Superintendent for Policing Southampton (responsible for
policing protests and football matches)

Phil Price, Acting Inspector for Southampton North NPT (until end of January)

Yozanne Richards, A/Inspector Southampton North NPT

Tim Nelson, SCC.

Public Space Protection Order

(i) What are the two authorities doing to enforce it, how will they be monitoring it and what are the objectives?

Now that the signs have been installed along Portswood High Street, the new Public Space Protection Order is live. This strengthened Order replaces the Order that lapsed at the end of April 2025, which only covered street drinking. It now also covers aggressive begging and drug and psychoactive substance use. The PSPO covers five areas of the city: Shirley, Bitterne, City Centre, Woolston and Portswood.

The Order lasts 3 years. The paperwork went live on 30 November 2025 and the Order will expire on 30 November 2028. It can be extended for a further 2 years after that period if there is evidence that it is working/is successful. Enforcement is by the SCC Community

Safety team (of 4 people), who do regular patrols, and the police who will work in partnership to use the additional powers to challenge those behaviours. The PSPO gives the police and the SCC Community Safety team powers to disperse people who are found to be breaking the PSPO. For the police, they have powers to remove alcohol from individuals. However, SCC staff are not able to do this. Both authorities will document when and where the powers are used and this data will be collected by Francesca Prior (SCC Service Manager, Community Safety) to enable her to understand if the powers are being used and how successful they are.

The objective is to reduce anti-social behaviour. While enforcement is a priority, they will mainly tackle this from an educational perspective to ensure that they are supporting those affected - helping individuals to access services and support. It's trying to be as inclusive and supportive as possible. Tickets/fixed penalty notices may be given out.

Report incidents to the police and/or Community Safety:

<https://www.highfieldresidents.org.uk/reporting-anti-social-behaviour-which-authority-to-use/>

NB This was not discussed at the meeting but, for information, the Order covers the area from Gordon Avenue (near Waitrose) to the junction of Portswood Road with Highfield Lane. It also covers St Denys Road from Portswood up to approximately Portswood Police Station, and also part of Westridge Road from Portswood.

(ii) Does the PSPO cover "when street attached walk into takeaways aggressively asking staff for free takeaway food. This was reported to me (Cllr Savage) by some high street staff at the weekend"

Yes, this intimidating behaviour could be covered under 'aggressive begging'. The PSPO allows the police, in partnership, to work to get to people on all the problems that cause 'aggressive begging'.

Police Statistics

The overall crime figure for Portswood to end December 2025 was actually dropping, at 144. There was a spike in November in shoplifting. There is lots of good work being undertaken with retailers and that spike reduced into December/January. There is currently a spike in burglaries in sheds and outbuildings. The team will be focusing on this type of crime. There was a spike just before Christmas in thefts from motor vehicles. This is being brought down.

I would like to add that the problem with scooters / bikes on the pavements is not just with Voi as many illegal scooters and high powered delivery bikes use the pavements

The police take a measured approach. There are two extremes. If you get a law abiding member of the public who is not understanding of the legislation, they are given education. The issue is around the really dangerous use of these vehicles with anti-social behaviour.

The police issue tickets. They are also looking into the use of Smart Spray Technology using ultra violet light. It sprays on a unique identity number. Any problem with Voi can be reported directly to Voi.

Many of the shops and businesses are concerned about break-ins and experiencing very high levels of shoplifting - what is being done by the police to address these issues?

Shoplifting is a continuing issue and has been for the last year. Since mid September 2025, there have been 85 reports of shoplifting alone. Out of the 85, Portswood police have charged people or otherwise dealt with 48 of these offences positively. Seven suspects are still under investigation. There has been a 56.4% detection rate. Some stores have been hit harder than others. Portswood police have worked with them and some have now employed security. A lot of people who shoplift are substance abusers of various sorts.

We don't see many police on the high street. Is there going to be a visible increase in policing on the streets?

The police regularly patrol the high street and will continue to do so. They also regularly engage with businesses on the high street. The Council monitor the cameras and the police radio channels. For crime (and bikes on pavements), they do not monitor the high street 24/7 via the cameras. They monitor CCTV when there is a live incident and it is used in real time. They work closely with CCTV to have access to the evidence required.

There is a new local policing App in use which captures some data. Operation Sentinel is expected to do targeted controls/patrols (Portswood is included in this).

There is an increase in drug dealing in Priory Hard; what can be done to actively stop this?

The police are aware of the location. Detecting drug dealing is very intelligence led. There is an under-reporting issue. Drug related harm is monitored very closely by the Neighbourhood Team. Cllr Finn said there were lots of nitrous oxide issues on Priory Hard. Police advice is to ask people to call 101 to report this. This will create an incident number and let the police know. The 101 response time is relatively quick now. Reporting empowers the police to do something. Reporting is key. It is a city-wide / national issue.

When reporting online, it really does not matter which title you select. The police will work it out.

Many of the shops that are the victims of shoplifting have video footage and still images captured of regular offenders. Can they display the images on their premises to be viewed by their own staff to deter further thefts, and what will the police be doing to crack down on shoplifting at highly targeted shops like Boots Chemist, Tidal Vape, T-Rex Supermarket and Poundland, amongst others?

Yes, they can but only to their own staff and no one else. Criminal Behaviour Orders can be placed on people, eg prolific offenders, to stop them from going into a shop. A breach of this is a criminal offence. Courts take this very seriously.

Incidents around Avondale Court

A resident said that these were not being followed up. The police asked if there were crime numbers; they will look into it. There is a Beat Surgery planned for February 2026 at Avondale Court. Councillors will attend.

How illegal parking on the Broadway (on yellow lines and especially at night) is being enforced?

Francesca contacted the parking team in advance of the meeting. 793 notices have been placed on vehicles since April 2025. All of them on double yellow lines and loading bays. The Council is taking this seriously. They have several different patrols.

Businesses are reporting lots of homeless in the shop doorways. What can be done about this?

On 22 December, the Homeless and Community Safety Teams had a 'day of action'. It was deemed a success so this will be a regular occurrence.

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