

Retail Sector Council – 11 June 2025

Meeting Note

1. Attendees

Co-Chairs: Minister Gareth Thomas MP, Co-Chair

Richard Pennycook, Co-Chair

Attendees: James Lowman (ACS), Helen Dickinson (BRC), John Boumphrey (Amazon), Kari Rogers (Primark), Nick Beighton (Secret Sales), Dave McCarthy (HSBC, B&M Retail), Tom Ironside (British Retail Consortium), Peter Jelkeby (IKEA).

Apologies: Simon Roberts (Sainsbury's), Anthony Hemmerdinger (Boots), Robbie Feather (The Very Group), Paddy Lillis (USDAW), Victoria Robertshaw (Delicious Planet), Ian Filby (Pinewood Technologies plc), Andrew Goodacre (BIRA).

Guests: Emma Ormond (Primark, Delivery Group High Street Lead), David Leach (Boots, Delivery Group member), Luke Walpole (Sainsburys, Delivery Group), Mark Newman (The Very Group, Delivery Group).

Officials in attendance: Rosa Estevez (DBT), Charles McCall, (DBT), Cal Madden (DBT), Susan Bide (DBT), Theo Heren (MHCLG), Daniel Pinder (HMT), James Roddy (HMT), Seema Bosor (DBT), Anne-Marie Pickup (HO), Edward Perchard (DBT), Yazmin Taylor (DBT).

2. Summary of actions

<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>
To create a retail/cyber crime workstream with the purpose of enabling knowledge sharing and cooperating among the sector and Government.	Richard Pennycook/Delivery Group
To consider the feedback provided and amend the paper according to the discussion.	Emma Ormond (Delivery Group)
To organise further discussion on the High Streets workstream, especially to consider the Employment Rights Bill angle and business rates.	Delivery Group

To amend the trade paper in line with the discussion and feedback provided by members.	Andrew Goodacre
To organise further discussions on the Trade workstream to elaborate on the product safety and consider the inclusion of environmental issues.	Delivery Group

3. **Note of Discussion**

a) Welcome/Introductions

The Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed the agenda.

b) Retail/Cyber crime

Richard Pennycook opened the discussion by emphasising the critical nature of retail and cyber-crime, its relevance, and the need for resilience among retailers.

Members highlighted the supportive role of the National Cyber Security Centre offering guidance for both large and small companies. The sector is working to tackle physical retail crime, but not much has been done on digital crime which has a far bigger impact for businesses. Many CEOs would benefit from further training and a toolkit to address these risks.

Members also discussed the enforcement point, which is considered critical, and agreed that the group could explore ways in which they can support enforcement to take action and achieve outcomes.

Home Office officials provided an update on the Safer Streets Summer work, including the Crime and Policing Bill, Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, Retail Crime Forum, the delivery of hyper-local crime prevention plans, the Safe Streets Mission, Town Centre Patrols and the engagement with Crime Commissioners.

Members welcomed the steps that the Home Office are taking to prevent retail crime and emphasised the importance of visibility and coordination across the county and not just town centres. There is a need to identify key regional activation moments to maximise both local and national coordination. They also recognised that the upcoming ShopKind Week presents an opportunity to incorporate broader messaging into this campaign.

Action: The Delivery Group to create a retail/cyber crime workstream with the purpose of enabling knowledge sharing and cooperating among the sector and Government.

c) Update from the RSC delivery group

High Streets

Emma Ormond (High Streets Delivery Group lead) provided an overview of the recent work that had been undertaken by the Delivery Group looking at High Streets. The group developed a paper that provides a structured approach with medium term policy outcomes. The intention of the group is to concentrate on those issues that are specific retail interests and then invite comment from other high street sectors. The strategy is being developed at a national level, addressing broader concerns while acknowledging ongoing work at the local level.

Members discussed the most recent changes to the paper. They highlighted the importance of reaching industry agreement on employment law to establish a framework that the sector as a whole will be confident to support.

A reduction on business rates was also raised by members as a meaningful step in support of the High Streets. Treasury officials in attendance acknowledged ongoing engagement with the sector on the multiplier and assured that the voice and position of the sector has been heard clear. They also confirmed that the summer business rates paper will define pockets where Government is exploring actions.

Action: Emma Ormond to consider the feedback provided and amend the paper according to the discussion.

Action: The Delivery Group to organise further discussion on the High Streets workstream, especially to consider The Employment Bill angle and business rates.

Trade

For the last months the Delivery Group Trade workstream, led by Andrew Goodacre, has been working to develop a trade paper with a focus on Low Value Imports and VAT.

Members agreed on the latest changes to the document, noting the need to include and consider online platforms and environmental issues. They noted that sector concerns on Low Value Imports have existed for a long time, with the loophole costing retail businesses lots of money and contributing to job losses. Members emphasised that by bypassing UK Corporation Tax requirements and failing to contribute to domestic employment, HMT are not getting a return from a sale actually made in the UK, which translates into a wasted opportunity for revenue. Members also suggested that HM

Treasury considers making marketplaces responsible for collecting vendor's details for both UK and non-UK vendors.

With the Product Safety Bill on the way, members also considered the paper an opportunity to highlight the sector's concerns on product safety. Officials from the Office for Product Safety and Standards in the call provided a summary of the Bill and highlighted the plan to consult in Autumn on duties for particular marketplaces.

HM Treasury officials on the call emphasised the wide engagement recently undertaken with the sector on these matters, and reassured members that concerns and suggestions have been heard. They also raised the relative complexity of dealing with these policies, and the practicalities of how it is implemented at the border.

Action: Andrew Goodacre to amend the trade paper in line with the discussion and feedback provided by members.

Action: The Delivery Group to organise further discussions on the Trade workstream to elaborate on the product safety and consider the inclusion of environmental issues.

e) AOB

The Minister thanked all Council Members for their time and contributions and reminded the group that the next session will take place in September. Richard Pennycook confirmed that work on cyber-crime will start earlier with support from the Delivery Group.

4. Dates for forthcoming meetings - 2025:

- 10 September 2025 (11:30 – 13:00) In-person meeting, The Old Admiralty Building.
- 2 December (11:30 – 13:00) In-person meeting, The Old Admiralty Building.