

Joint Retail Sector Council and Retail Crime Forum – 25 November 2025

Meeting Note

1. Attendees

Chair: Minister for Employment Rights and Consumer Protection Kate Dearden MP, supported by Richard Pennycook (RSC) and Minister for Policing and Crime, Sarah Jones MP, supported by Katharine Wilson (Deputy Director for Neighbourhood Crime, Home Office).

Invitees:

Retail Sector Council:

Nick Beighton (Secret Sales), Joanne Thomas (USDAW), Dave McCarthy (Independent Retail Expert), Andrew Goodacre (British Independent Retailers Association), Helen Dickinson (British Retail Consortium), Tom Ironside (British Retail Consortium), Kari Rodgers (Primark), James Lowman (Association of Convenience Stores), Victoria Robertshaw (Keelham Farm Shop), Anthony Hemmerdinger (Managing Director of Boots UK and Ireland), Peter Jelkeby (IKEA).

Retail Crime Forum:

Alex Goss (Assistant Chief Constable for Merseyside, NPCC lead for Retail Crime), Lisa Maslen (Superintendent, City of London Police and National Business Crime Centre), Kary Bourne (Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex), Tesco, Sainsbury's, Coop, JD Sports Fashion Plc, Primark, Aldi, Spar, JLP, TJX Europe, Royal Mail, Next, AS Watson, Morrisons, Lidl, Nationwide, M&S, BP, Ikea, Federation of Wholesale Distributors, FSB, National Association of Crime Partnerships, Retail Motor Industry Federation/Petrol Retailers Association, National Federation of Independent Retailers, Institute of Customer Services, National Business Crime Solution, Mitie, Safer Business Network, University of London, Welsh Government, Opal, Police and Crime Commissioner, Association of Convenience Stores, Boots.

Guests: Richard Horne (CEO, NCSC)

Officials in attendance: Jaee Samant (Director General, Business Group, DBT), Rosa Estevez (Deputy Director for Creative Industries, Digital & E-Commerce and Consumer Goods, DBT), Charles McCall (Head of Retail and Consumer Goods Manufacturing, DBT).

2. Summary of actions

<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>
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Retail Sector Council to consider whether work should be undertaken with insurers to support small businesses and enable them to access cyber insurance.	Retail Sector Council
Retail companies to consider explicitly endorsing the work of the Retail Trust Group.	Retailers
Retail Sector Council to provide draft Terms of Reference of the Cyber Resilience Group to National Cyber Security Centre.	Retail Sector Council
To convene the Cyber Resilience Group in new year.	DBT
Retailers to indicate if they would like to be involved in the communications activity.	Retailers
British Retail Consortium to cross check their members are actively engaged with the Retail Trust Group.	BRC

3. Note of Discussion

a) Welcome/Introductions

Minister Dearden welcomed everyone to the meeting and Richard Pennycook provided an overview of the agenda, noting the focus on crime and security issues. It was noted that Minister for Policing and Crime, Sarah Jones MP would be joining the meeting later and the Chief Executive of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) was also taking part.

Minister Dearden outlined the importance of tackling retail crime and cybercrime, noting the close ongoing collaboration between DBT, the Home Office, law enforcement, NCSC and business on this issue. She thanked all attending for their participation.

Katharine Wilson of the Home Office added her welcome on behalf of the Minister for Policing and Crime.

b) Cyber Crime

Recognising the importance of the company and systemic threat posed by cybercrime, and the impact of recent attacks on the sector, Minister Dearden and Richard Pennycook introduced Richard Horne, the Chief Executive of the NCSC . Richard Pennycook noted that the Sector Council had drafted some terms of reference about the role which it could fulfil in relation to cybercrime and posed the question of whether the Retail Sector Council should stand up a group to consider its

role in this space – important for the RSC to play an additive role. Minister Dearden noted that this is the start of the conversation.

Richard Horne introduced himself and the work of the NCSC. He noted that ransomware groups are a particular challenge to the retail industry in the UK, with Russian based organisations very active. The impact of this activity on retailers' operations can be extremely disruptive as has been seen in previous years. He flagged the questions that Board's need to ask – these include:

- 1) whether they were active participants in [Cyber Essentials](#) – both the company and their suppliers?
- 2) if we lost our IT, how would we continue business (in addition to crisis response)?
- 3) are we registered for the NCSC's [Early Warning Service](#)?
- 4) can we adopt the NCSC's [Cyber Governance Code of Practice](#)?
- 5) should we participate in the Retail Trust Group to share intelligence?

Retail Sector Council members and Retail Crime Forum members raised a range of questions and observations. These included how effectively the Retail Trust Group represents the industry – Richard Horne noted the strong partnership with the British Retail Consortium, which had been instrumental in driving increased participation and engagement. The extent to which the NCSC was looking at the quality of software being used by companies to ensure that it is effective and not being used to facilitate criminal access was also raised. The NCSC noted that it worked extensively with larger technology providers to ensure that vulnerabilities are effectively identified and addressed. NCSC also issues advice, including Secure by Design, aimed at ensuring effective company approaches to address these procurement issues. It was noted that the Business and Trade Committee had just released its report on the recent cyber-attacks and that there is a significant amount that businesses need to do for themselves to prepare.

In addition, retailers highlighted the importance of providing small businesses with the right advice and support at the right time. It was proposed that work could be done with insurers to establish the steps that need to be taken by small businesses to ensure that they are able to access cyber insurance, including the role of Cyber Essentials. The value of the Retail Trust Group was highlighted and the extent to which it could be utilised by smaller retail businesses. Richard Horne highlighted the Cyber Essentials scheme and the support SMEs can receive through that, including access to a 24/7 hotline and free insurance.

The draft Terms of Reference for the Retail Sector Council Cyber Resilience Group were also noted and agreed, with the NCSC being involved in the drafting.

Action: Retail Sector Council to consider whether work should be undertaken with insurers to support small businesses and enable them to access cyber insurance.

Action: Retail companies to consider explicitly endorsing the work of the Retail Trust Group.

Action: British Retail Consortium to cross check their members are actively engaged with the Retail Trust Group.

Action: Retail Sector Council to provide draft Terms of Reference for the Cyber Resilience Group to the National Cyber Security Centre.

Action: DBT to convene the Cyber Resilience Group in new year, with Richard Pennycook as chair.

c) Retail Crime and d) Tackling Retail Crime Together Strategy and e) Communication

Katharine Wilson provided an overview of the Government's current work with the police and business to address retail crime. She noted that the Government is introducing an offence for assaulting a retail worker and repealing the legislation which has led to a perception that there are no consequences for stealing goods of under £200. .

Ed Woodall provided an update on the communications activity which is being discussed. He noted the extensive partnership working that is underway and delivering material benefits to retailers. There will be a meeting on 17 December to discuss further, and members are invited to indicate if they would like to be involved.

Alex Goss provided an update on retail crime and the accompanying strategy for tackling it. It was noted that extensive work is currently underway to tackle rising levels of retail crime nationally.

A range of other attendees outlined the purpose and focus of the Tackling Retail Crime Together Strategy. Bringing together the different data sources, from retailers, police and others, to build an accurate picture of what's happening in relation to retail crime. The role of the Retail Crime Forum was also outlined.

Minister Jones emphasised the Government's commitment to tackling retail crime.

Action: Members to indicate if they would like to be involved in the communications meeting.

f) Update on the Winter of Action

Minister Jones noted the extremely positive work being undertaken by law enforcement and partners through the summer. It is now intended that a Winter of Action will target retail crime, the night time economy and anti-social behaviour.

The Winter of Action will run from 1 December 2025 to 31 January 2026, focusing on tackling retail crime, night-time economy offences, and anti-social behaviour across England and Wales during the winter period.

Led by Police and Crime Commissioners and Deputy Mayors, local delivery plans will be implemented in partnership with police forces and community safety organisations to address the issues that matter most in town centres.

This initiative seeks to build on the momentum achieved over the summer while responding to seasonal challenges such as increased retail activity, festive events, and heightened socialising. These factors bring greater risks, including shop theft, crime and disorder linked to the night-time economy, and violence against women and girls.

Actions will be informed by local intelligence and partnership insight, ensuring tailored responses to the unique circumstances of each area.

AOB

Richard Pennycook thanked all attendees for their time and contributions.

Dates for forthcoming Retail Sector Council meetings - 2025:

- **2 December (11:30 – 12:15): Focus on the Budget**