

<b>Meeting date:</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> November 2022
<b>Subject/Report Title:</b>	Neighbourhood Crime and the Impact of Cost of Living
<b>Report Author/Lead Contact Officer:</b>	Chief Superintendent Ian Parnell, West Midlands Police

<b>1. Purpose of Report</b>
1.1 To inform the Board of the current position in respect of Neighbourhood Crime. To describe the impact of the of living crisis on this crime type. To describe police and partnership activity taking place to tackle offenders and prevent offending.
<b>2. Decision/s recommended</b>
2.1 The Board is asked to receive the update regarding Neighbourhood Crime.
<b>3. Background</b>
<p><b><u>Strategic Overview</u></b></p> <p>3.1 The previous government's delivery of a mini-Budget caused substantial disruption to the UK economy, leading to speculation of interest rates reaching 6% in 2023. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned that those measures were likely to fuel the cost-of-living crisis and that "the worst is yet to come" for the world economy as war in Ukraine continues. Measures already outlined and those due in the Autumn Statement are <b>unlikely</b> to fully mitigate societal challenges.</p> <p>3.2 The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has stated that "big and painful" spending cuts are necessary to put the UK's finances on a sustainable path, whilst the Bank of England has warned of "a material risk to UK financial stability".</p> <p><b><u>Impact Assessment</u></b></p> <p>3.3 It remains <b>almost certain</b> that broader sections of society will be negatively impacted across a spectrum of vulnerability (physical and mental health deterioration, and financial deprivation), exacerbating police and partner service demand.</p> <p>3.4 Cost of living pressures are <b>likely</b> to result in increases of 'survival crime', particularly for the most deprived.</p> <p>3.5 Deepening inequality and falling standards of living are <b>likely</b> to contribute to an increased likelihood of social unrest, deterioration in social cohesion and increased</p>

attraction towards fringe politics (as seen with growth of far-right support in Sweden and Italy). Hate crimes are **likely** to increase.

- 3.6 Inconsistent and changing government policies are **highly likely** to inhibit efficient organisational planning.
- 3.7 Retraction of services, supply shortages and increased deprivation are **highly likely** to contribute to increases in acquisitive crimes and violence. Organised criminality is **almost certainly** exploiting individual and commercial vulnerabilities in the provision of goods and services not readily available through more traditional channels.

### **Additional Drivers**

- 3.8 The signalling of spending cuts, the IFS stating deep spending cuts are inevitable and the Resolution Foundation warning cuts could be as deep as those after the 2009 financial crisis, suggests it is at least a **realistic possibility** that the UK will undergo a further period of austerity. The Autumn Statement is scheduled to be delivered on 17 November.
- 3.9 Wage stagnation alongside continued inflation is **highly likely** to result in continued and increasing industrial/strike activity. It is a **realistic possibility** that such activity will create secondary disruption to the movement of goods and delivery of services; the impact being a vicious circle of further shortages and inflation.
- 3.10 It is a **realistic possibility** that the largest outbreak of avian flu on record (and the culling of 48 million birds across the UK and the EU in the last year) will impact on the availability of livestock, further inflating the cost of meat.
- 3.11 It is at least a **realistic possibility** that the price of carbon dioxide (speculated to rise by as much as 3000%) could further exacerbate the already inflated price of goods in the food and drink sector.
- 3.12 It is likely that the cost of fuel will rise again following the OPEC+ agreement to reduce oil exports.

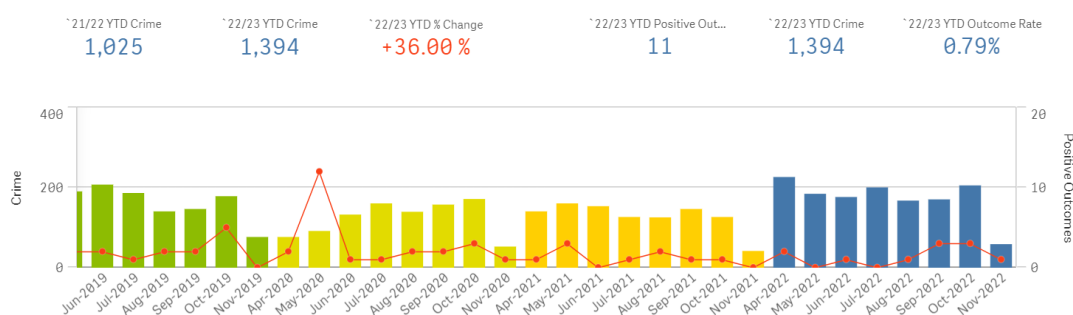
## Crime Seasonality

Crime Name	Month			
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Bilking	Orange	Orange	Orange	Yellow
Theft From Motor Vehicle	Orange	Orange	Orange	Yellow
Residential Burglary	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
Personal Robbery	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Personal Robbery (Victim Female)	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Business Robbery	Orange	Orange	Orange	Yellow
Theft From the Person	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Yellow
Violence with Injury (DA)	Green	Green	Orange	Yellow
Violence with Injury (Non-DA)	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green
Violence with Injury (Victim Female)	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green
Serious Violence	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Rape (Victim U25)	Orange	Green	Green	Orange
Rape (Victim Female)	Orange	Green	Green	Orange
Stalking (DA)	Green	Green	Yellow	Orange

- 3.13 Moving towards the end of 2022 and into January, it is expected that neighbourhood crimes will increase. Residential burglaries have already started this trend, so can be expected to rise further. There is a **realistic possibility** that seasonal vehicle crime will be balanced by the activity taken in recent months around Op Seclusion (vehicle crime), as offences have been stable in recent weeks.
- 3.14 Violence tends to reduce during the winter period, with some exceptions:
- 3.15 There are often spikes of youth violence around half term/bonfire night, and Christmas holidays.
- 3.16 The Christmas/New Year period creates spikes with offences within the Night-Time Economy with after-work parties and late night shoppers. Footfall to entertainment venues is **likely** to increase during the World Cup, with varying kick-off times **likely** to cause prolonged periods of alcohol consumption. However, there is a **realistic possibility** that some increases in footfall are balanced by the cost of living crisis leading to more people staying at home.
- 3.17 Reports of Domestic Abuse (DA) tend to spike on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. With Christmas falling on a weekend this year and the bank holidays during the week, there is potential for increased DA as people are at home together for longer, with the additional stresses relating to cost of living pressures.
- 3.18 Make off without payment (bilking) tends to increase in the autumn, with darker nights providing greater opportunity. It is unclear what impact the heightened cost of fuel is having and would continue to have.
- 3.19 Other offences which are not usually a seasonal threat are **highly likely** be impacted by the deteriorating economic situation. More people are **likely** to commit offences such as shoplifting, theft other or theft from the person as a means of 'survival crime'. Worsening addictions and mental health are likely to drive more crime, and **almost certainly** more demand for service; while established offenders may be willing to undertake more risk.

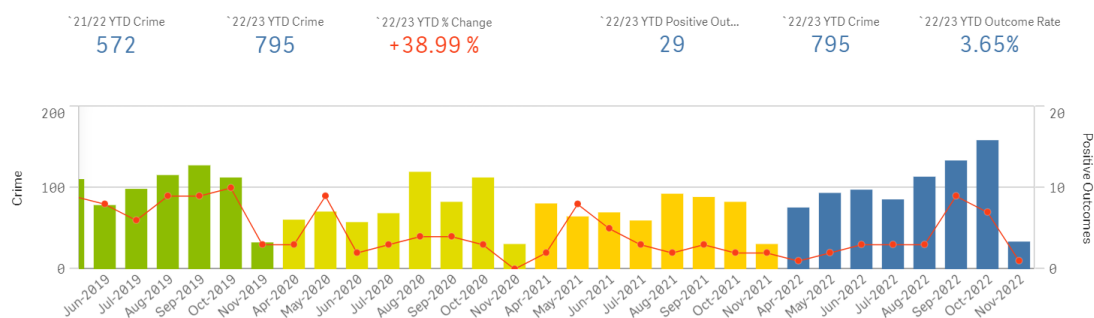
### 3.20 Vehicle Crime & Residential Burglary

- 3.21 Vehicles remain the prime targeted commodity from vehicle crime and burglary. Supply chain/logistical disruptions, shortages in raw materials and volatile metal markets (resulting from a combination of issues, including the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia/Ukraine conflict) continue to elevate used vehicle prices and shortages of car parts. These will continue to influence volumes of vehicle crime and burglary where a vehicle is targeted.
- 3.22 Many vehicle crime offences can be committed relatively simply and quickly, making it highly attractive as a low risk/high reward crime. This has been exacerbated by a lack of significant deterrence. On conviction, offenders are unlikely to receive a custodial sentence in comparison with other acquisitive crimes such as robbery or burglary.
- 3.23 The West Midlands has seen an upward trajectory in vehicle crime (chart below for Solihull), including TOMV and theft from motor vehicle (TFMV). TFMV offences have increased, returning to pre-pandemic levels, whilst TOMV has exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Since April 2022, there have been 200 offences per month. A Vehicle Crime Task Force (Operation Seclusion) has been formed. Its remit is to focus on neighbourhoods with the most significant problems, chop shops, prisoners from with recorded theft of motor vehicles, prisoners from across the force with significant intelligence linking them to vehicle crime, and any outstanding suspects for vehicle crime in the last three months (including deposition sites).
- 3.24 The hotspots for Vehicle Crime are the areas bordering Birmingham East & Birmingham West in the Shirley and LEOS areas. Most offences tend to be overnight. Most vehicle thefts are keyless, and a variety of vehicles are being targeted.



- 3.25 Residential burglary (Op Turnhand) has also seen an escalation in offending with an increase to over 100 offences per month being reported since August 2022 (chart below Solihull). A significant number of offences happen overnight with offenders travelling onto the borough via a number of routes.
- 3.26 Over the past reporting period (4 weeks) Olton and Lyndon have been the peak neighbourhoods for offences, with 11 offences apiece recorded, followed by Blythe (9 offences).
- 3.27 The profile of burglary offenders includes those driven by organised crime and those who offend to support addiction to controlled substances.
- 3.28 In addition to vehicles being targeted as a commodity for burglary, more tradition

offences are occurring where cash and jewellery are targeted. As Christmas approaches it remains likely that gifts will also be targeted.



- 3.29 It remains highly likely that shortages of car parts will continue and that the price of second-hand vehicles will remain inflated. This remains highly likely to result in increased levels of associated vehicle crime.
- 3.30 The business models used by OCGs are complex and non-linear; vehicles can be linked to multiple revenue streams and the drugs market. As a result, there is at least a realistic possibility that the vehicle commodity market is linked to poly-criminality.
- 3.31 There remain intelligence gaps regarding offenders and the involvement of organised criminality, methods of entry and disposal routes. This challenges WMP's ability to better understand and combat vehicle crime.
- 3.32 In September, the NPCC announced that all forces have committed to attend all home burglaries, acknowledging the trauma caused by home intrusions. Work is underway in WMP to determine the best approach for delivering this commitment to our communities, whilst Op Turnhand has been commissioned to analyse burglary offences.

**Police and Partnership Response**

- 3.33 Operational patrols are in place across the borough based on the threat profile and demand analysis. Solihull NPU staff are supported by other WMP assets in the delivery of patrol activity.
- 3.34 There is a significant covert policing plan in place across the borough utilising well established tactics to develop intelligence, identify offenders, recover stolen vehicles and bring offenders to justice.
- 3.35 Burglary Cars are in place to maximise evidential yield and provide support to victims including crime prevention advice and super cocooning tactics. Initial feedback in relation to the use of Burglary Cars has been positive.
- 3.36 Proactive operations have taken place targeting outstanding wanted offenders, handlers of stolen property and 'chop shop' locations.
- 3.37 Nominals with a history of burglary or vehicle crime offending are actively being managed and monitored by Offender Management staff and Probation.
- 3.38 Crime Prevention advice is being pushed out across the borough through a number of formats including local surgeries, online forums and through WMNOW and Social Media channels.
- 3.39 Force CID are investigating all reports of residential burglary and a number of

offenders are currently in the criminal justice system.

3.40 Where the driver is 'survival crime' there is good partnership support in place in terms of foodbanks, access to grants and warm places to help mitigate some of the threat.

3.41 Safer Solihull will meet in November 2022 to discuss what additional activity can be put in place from a partnership perspective.

#### **4. List of appendices**

4.1 N/A