

Good evening,

Firstly, my apologies that I am unable to be present this evening. My name is Nick Atkinson, and I am currently covering for Inspector McAiney whilst she temporarily fulfils the Chief Inspector role at Maidstone for a period of approximately two months. I am ordinarily the Beat Team Sergeant for Tonbridge and Malling, a role I have held since July 2021.

I oversee a team of 10 Police Constables who are assigned to specific areas across Tonbridge and Malling. Their role is to engage with local communities, gather information and intelligence regarding emerging issues, and address concerns in a proactive and professional manner.

Within Tonbridge, two officers from the beat team are allocated to ward coverage and one to the town centre itself – PC Moore has returned to the town centre, and his presence is expected to provide reassurance to the community and contribute to crime prevention.

They are supported by two town centre Neighbourhood Task Force officers. These officers focus on addressing ongoing issues including anti-social behaviour, targeting priority nominals, and reducing crime through high-visibility patrols, stop searches, and positive enforcement where appropriate.

Over the past three months, officers have conducted targeted days of action in Tonbridge to tackle retail theft, utilising both plain-clothed and uniformed patrols. During one such operation, Neighbourhood Task Force officers were alerted via the Shop Safe radio system by Sainsbury's security staff to two males who had used over £600 worth of Nectar Points in suspicious transactions. Both individuals were arrested, and subsequent searches of their home addresses and vehicle identified further gift cards and items believed to have been fraudulently obtained.

Beat team officers also conducted a stop search of a male acting suspiciously in the Castle car park. A search of the individual and his vehicle uncovered a concealed compartment containing Class A drugs. The male was arrested, interviewed, charged, and remanded to court following CPS authorisation.

In March, a male was deterred from committing theft at Sainsbury's and was subsequently stopped with a trolley of goods stolen from Waitrose, valued at over £750. He was arrested, interviewed, and charged. On a separate occasion, a female suspect involved in two shop thefts was identified and dealt with by way of community resolution. It was further established that she had used a Motability vehicle in the commission of offences, and Kent Police has requested its removal.

Local officers have also successfully identified multiple offenders captured on CCTV for offences across the district, as well as in neighbouring areas such as Tunbridge Wells, resulting in arrests and offenders being brought to justice.

A number of retail premises in Tonbridge have been identified as priority locations due to high levels of reported offences. Officers have increased patrols at these locations and provided tailored crime prevention advice to staff, contributing to a reduction in offending.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains a key priority for Kent Police. Officers have engaged with local businesses, including supermarkets, beauty salons, and hairdressers, to distribute awareness materials. In addition, “walk and talk” events have been conducted to engage directly with women regarding safety concerns and areas where they feel vulnerable.

As expected with the warmer weather, there has been an increase in anti-social behaviour within the town centre. Officers have been addressing issues involving a group of youths aged 14–17 responsible for incidents including theft, criminal damage, and other low-level offending. Identified individuals have been interviewed, and those aged 16 have been issued with Community Protection Warning Notices restricting their access to the town centre unless accompanied by an adult. Breaches will result in further enforcement action. PCSO Baker and PCSO Coe have had leading roles in this, seizing CCTV of offending and assisting with identification of those involved as well as completing follow up visits with the families.

Officers have also seized several illegal e-bikes and e-scooters in recent weeks. Engagement with parents, alongside joint working with housing associations and TMBC Community Safety Unit, has had a positive impact. Continued enforcement and partnership working aim to reduce further offending.

There has been a recent rise in rogue trading offences. Last week, a group were arrested for targeting vulnerable and elderly residents in Tonbridge, charging excessive amounts for work that was either substandard or not completed, and in some cases increasing the sums demanded beyond what had initially been agreed. A number of these incidents were reported by vigilant neighbours, which reflects the strength and supportive nature of the local community.

In summary, officers will continue to work closely with partner agencies, including the local authority, housing providers and community safety partners, to address the issues affecting Tonbridge. There will remain a strong focus on tackling anti-social behaviour proactively, using the full range of powers available to us to prevent escalation and support those impacted within the community. We are committed to identifying and targeting individuals who are responsible for causing harm and disruption, ensuring that appropriate and proportionate action is taken to bring offenders to justice. At the same time, we will maintain a visible and approachable presence within the town to provide reassurance to residents, businesses and visitors, and to act as a clear deterrent to those considering offending. Through continued engagement, enforcement and partnership working, we aim to sustain positive outcomes, reduce crime and disorder, and support a safe and thriving community.