



Tenterden has been targeted by criminals, with crimes including theft, credit card fraud and shoplifting being reported according to a town councillor Posed by a model

Criminals think town is an easy target claims councillor



Town councillor Mike Carter
Picture: Martin Apps



Tara McCarragher, who runs Rising Star in Tenterden High Street, had £100 stolen from her till
Picture: Gary Brown

Funding for alert system proposed



Tenterden town councillor Sue Ferguson

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Criminals are targeting Tenterden on Fridays.

They are stealing from businesses and shoppers using distraction thefts.

The claim came from Cllr Mike Carter, president of Tenterden Chamber of Commerce.

He told a town council meeting on Monday: "The town has become a target for crime. We are being seen as an easy target."

"There are shops that may not even know they have had things stolen."

Cllr Sue Ferguson said it was a significant problem: "There have been handbags stolen and money taken from tills."

After the meeting, Cllr Carter said

there had been a number of incidents of thefts from tills, handbags stolen and credit card frauds.

"These are just the ones we know about," he said.

"There may be others that businesses are unaware of until they do a stock check.

"It seems to be happening mainly on Fridays, which could be because the town is busy as it is market day."

"I would like to get the chamber and town council working together to protect the High Street.

"We need to barter with the police over this as well as we have lost the police office."

Cllr Carter said a Town-Net scheme, which alerts shopkeepers and others to crimes, could help.

He added: "If the council and chamber each put in about £250, we could get something going."

Among the victims of crime has

been Tara McCarragher, who runs Rising Star gift shop in High Street.

She had £100 stolen from her till by a man who kept asking her for boxes for goods on Friday, September 20.

"He said he was in a hurry and was waiting for his mother who was going to pay half," she said.

"I got boxes and he already had goods worth £165 ready to go when he asked for more things without asking for prices, and again wanted them boxed.

"I was suspicious but because I had a shop full of people thought he would not do anything.

"When I came down he had gone, leaving the goods. I went to ring up another sale and realised he had cleared out the till."

A man of a similar description was reported to be in town last Thursday, when cash was stolen from another shop.

He was said to be going into premises saying goods had been put aside for him to collect.

Miss McCarragher said a walkie-talkie alert system would help, but it would need to be dedicated to Tenterden.

"We have to work as a town to catch these criminals," she added.

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■ Appeal after Vax machines stolen from shop, page 6.

CRIMES ARE 'ISOLATED INCIDENTS'

Police have denied that Tenterden is being targeted by thieves.

A spokesman said: "There is no evidence to suggest that Tenterden is being targeted. These appear to be isolated incidents.

"The theft of cash at Rising Star is being investigated.

"Incidents of distraction thefts and a stocky man and child going into shops have not been reported to police."

The spokesman added that a man had been arrested for suspected credit card fraud after ordering champagne from Liquid Pleasure in High Street.

That incident was reported in last week's Kentish Express as the alarm had been raised by the shop owner, Ian Florey.

Town councillors discussed whether to make a financial contribution, with the chamber, towards a Town-Net system, which alerts shopkeepers and others to problems in the area.

Cllr Mike Carter said the system linked with the police and CCTV cameras and could be listened to by shops and security officers.

He suggested getting someone from the Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC) to talk to councillors, and added: "It is worth getting half a dozen radios in the town."

Cllr Sue Ferguson said Town-Net had few members in Ashford because it was very expensive.

Councillors agreed to refer the matter to the council's tourism and local economy sub-committee.

APAC has already installed a radio system in Tenterden linked to the Ashford CCTV base.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) will be among those having radios and a number of businesses have already expressed an interest in joining.