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PCC elections attract sceptical voters

Retailers to vote for Police and Crime Commissioners despite misgivings

SIMON BANKS

Retailers are planning to vote in the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) election this week (May 5), despite concerns over the effectiveness of the PCC system and official figures showing that crime in the retail and wholesale sectors is higher than any other.

One retailer, who wished to remain anonymous, told *C-Store*: "I will vote, but I believe the PCC is just another middle man between communities and the police that has no substantial impact on local crime. Until there is investment in the police and more officers on the streets, I don't expect to see a decrease in the levels of crime."

According to latest figures from the Home Office's Commercial Victimisation survey, as many as one in five premises in the retail and wholesale sector experienced shop theft last year.

Jatinder Sahota, owner of Max's Londis in Sheppey, Kent, said: "I am voting and hope one of the candidates can take action to protect local businesses. I think it is important to vote and I encourage more local businesses to engage with local authorities.

"Some of the challenges



Crime in retail and wholesale sectors is higher than any other sector, Home Office figures show

retailers face are down to police cutbacks with response times slower than in the past. Even though we have a big presence of police community support officers that do a great job, I still think there is a need for officers on the streets."

Association of Convenience Stores chief executive James Lowman urged retailers to vote regardless of their reservations about PCCs' effectiveness. "There has been significant debate since the introduction of PCCs, with some suggesting that they are an important bridge between the public and the police to improve the

accountability of local forces, and others believing that they are just another level of bureaucracy in a system that is already ineffective," he said.

"Whichever camp you're in, the fact is that PCCs have an important role to play in setting priorities for the police in their area."

OPINION

Unconvinced

“The PCC doesn't feel like an effective voice for the community because I don't see enough of a police presence in the neighbourhood. It is easy to criticise, but you have to take into account cutbacks in resources.”

Nigel Dowdney, Earlham Shopper and Stalham Shopper, Norwich

“I am voting, but think the PCC isn't an effective voice for the community and isn't likely to have a big impact on local crime.”

Jai Singh, MJ's Go Local Extra, Sheffield

SHOP THEFT FIGURES

Latest figures from the Home Office's Commercial Victimisation survey found that crime levels in the retail and wholesale sectors are higher than any other sector, with accounts of shop

theft in 2015 accumulated to a total of 4.7 million cases.

The latest figures follow the ACS Crime Survey which showed that shop theft cost the convenience sector more than £43m

last year, with only 37% of retailers reporting they had not experienced any shop theft in their store.

According to the report, the average c-store is investing £1,370 in crime prevention a year.