

Title: Crime falls in Reading for fifth year in a row

Police in Reading have recorded a reduction in crime for the fifth year in succession.

The end of year crime figures, released at a media briefing yesterday (24/4) show a 3.7 per cent reduction compared to 2007/8.

Highlights include a 12.1 per cent fall in serious violent crime, a 10.6 per cent decrease in serious sexual offences and a 5.7 per cent reduction in serious acquisitive crime – a category which includes offences like burglary, robbery and vehicle crime.

Other notable reductions include a 2.5 per cent fall in criminal damage (which includes offences such as graffiti) and an 18.8 per cent reduction in theft from the person.

Supt Steve Kirk, the Commander of the Reading Local Police Area, said: “I am pleased with the reductions that have been achieved and I think these figures highlight the marked effort that police, Reading Borough Council and the public, through things like Neighbourhood Action Groups, have put into improving Reading over the past few years.

“I always pay particular attention to the long-term picture and that is why it is pleasing that we have recorded a reduction in overall crime for five years in succession now.

“There are some crime categories that have gone up over the past year like burglary (3.7 per cent) and robbery (27.1 per cent) but the overall picture is a downward one.”

Supt Kirk stressed that tackling burglary remains the main priority for Reading. He also believes that the type of robbery offences has changed over the past five years with a significant proportion now being carried out by young people on their peers.

He said: “Five years ago you would be talking about some very violent robberies but I think many that we have seen in Reading lately involve young people taking i-Pods and mobile phones from each other on the way home from school.”

Cllr Bet Tickner, lead councillor for communities and neighbourhoods, said: “The council welcomes these figures and we will continue to work with the police to tackle crime.”

Tony Page, representing the Thames Valley Police Authority, added: “The level of resources going into frontline policing in Reading is increasing again by another eight officers this year. This will underpin growth that has taken place in recent years both in terms of regular officers and in the large numbers of Police Community Support Officers that now work across the area. A higher uniformed presence is very reassuring to the community.

“I have every confidence that the partnership between police and Reading Borough Council, together with neighbourhood policing, will provide further reduction in crime and in particular the perception of crime.”