

CLEANER GREENER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 18th April, 2012

Present:- Councillor John Williams – in the Chair

Councillors The Mayor David Becket, Councillor Julie Cooper, Councillor Tony Kearon, Councillor Simon Tagg and Councillor Andrew Wemyss

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest stated.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2012 be agreed as a correct record subject to Councillor Miss Cooper's attendance being recorded.

3. SCRUTINY BRIEF - ALCOHOL CONCERNS

Consideration was given to a Scrutiny Brief for alcohol issues in Newcastle and questions which needed addressing by the Committee.

The committee agreed that in many cases the use of publicity was equally as important as the enforcement action in raising awareness regarding issues such as sales of alcohol and the distribution of contaminated alcohol.

In order to achieve the best publicity it would be important for the Borough Council to liaise with its Communications department and Staffordshire County Council Trading Standards department. Tools such as the Sentinel newspaper and The Reporter newspaper could be used to spread important information to residents.

The committee discussed the possibility of a grading scheme for off licences, this had been trialled in the past. Unfortunately, schemes such as this required the participation of the businesses and as yet such participation had not been forthcoming. It was however mentioned that Doug Morris from the Business Crime Initiative was keen to involve Trading Standards in the organisation and that tools such as Facebook and Twitter were starting to be used to spread the word.

Concerns were raised regarding a premise that had recently had its licence revoked by the Licensing Sub Committee. Members were now aware that the premise was applying for a new premise licence whilst at the same time appealing to the Magistrate regarding the decision of the sub committee. Officers confirmed that this was legal and a loophole in current legislation that needed attention at a national rather than local level.

Members questioned whether any specific publicity had been carried out with regards to Keele University who would soon be finishing their exams. Nothing had been put in place for this year but it was agreed that it would be looked into for the future.

Members questioned whether it was simple to identify counterfeit alcohol and as to whether a member of the public would be able to identify it in their local shop. Officials stated that identification was very difficult and that if anyone suspected counterfeit alcohol was being sold that they contact Trading Standards immediately.

It was considered that the Licensing Committee could have a role to play in the concerns over the sale of contaminated alcohol.

Trading Standards had no closure powers in regard to licensed premises. The police and Environmental Health had powers over noise and nuisance.

Premise closure would generate a court appearance which would determine whether the closure was lawful. A review would also be carried out by a Licensing Sub-Committee.

The problem of drinking on the streets was not an easy issue. The Police would move them on but they would simply congregate elsewhere. Most of the drinkers did not cause problems but it did increase the fear of crime.

Contaminated alcohol also caused health issues in Newcastle. The Accident and Emergency Department at a weekend had a large number of intoxicated patients which could be avoided. It was suggested that the Staffordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee be approached for any available information regarding this, along with the Staffordshire Observatory and the West Midlands Ambulance Service.

Newcastle has a first aider in the town centre through the safer nights campaign and it had been effective.

The Council was looking to obtain funding from the West Midlands Ambulance Service to expand to an A&E Hub.

Members agreed that the issue should be looked at further by this Committee. In addition, the Council's Head of Communications, Phil Jones, should be invited to the next meeting for the Communications Department's point of view.

- Resolved:-**
- (a) That the information be received.
 - (b) That the Council's Head of Communications be invited to the next meeting.
 - (c) That this Committee continues to look into this issue.

4. PROCESS FOR A REVIEW OF A PREMISES LICENCE

Consideration was given to a report outlining the process of submitting an application for a review of a Premise Licence. The document stated who would be interested parties and responsible authorities etc.

Resolved:- That the information be received.

5. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

Resolved:- That the public be excluded from meeting during consideration of the following item by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 7 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

6. **LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES - 19 MARCH 2012**

Members' attention was given to the minutes of a Licensing Sub-Committee outlining an application for a review of a premise licence under Section 51 of the Licensing Act 2003.

Resolved:- That the information be received.

**COUNCILLOR JOHN WILLIAMS
Chair**