

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12 DECEMBER 2017

REPORT BY HEAD OF HOUSING AND HEALTH

NIGHT TIME ECONOMY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES: IMPACT OF ALCOHOL USE ON POLICING

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL (WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE MARKET TOWNS)

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the key points of the recent consideration by the Licensing Committee of the impact of alcohol use on the policing of East Herts' town centres. Members' views are invited.
- The report invites the Committee members' views on work currently underway by officers to amend the council's statutory Statement of Licensing Policy to provide clearer guidance to all stakeholders regarding the licensing of premises selling alcohol in the district.
- The report notes that a future presentation to the Licensing Committee is to be given by Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team regarding the impact of alcohol consumption on health services. It is proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives a briefing on this issue at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY:

That:

(A)	the views of the police on the impact of alcohol on their activities be noted and views on how the council and police can work together to mitigate the impacts be passed to the Head of Housing and Health for consideration.
(B)	initial views on the upcoming review of the council's Statement of Licensing Policy regarding applications from licensed premises be provided to the Head of Housing and Health for consideration.
(C)	the Head of Housing and Health be requested to report on

the impact of alcohol on health services following the presentation from Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team to the Licensing Committee.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 28 March 2017, the then Community Scrutiny Committee considered a detailed report on the district's night time economy (NTE), that is, the economic activity taking place in the evening, such as eating and drinking, entertainment and nightlife. For the purposes of this report NTE hours are between 9pm and 5am, seven days a week.
- 1.2 The Committee noted that the NTE can bring many positive benefits to the district, from creating jobs and providing a diverse range of activities, such as providing entertainment, restaurants, pubs and clubs for both residents and visitors. Of note, there are 13,215 businesses listed on the East Herts business data base of which 527 are licensed to carry out the sale of alcohol, late night refreshment and/or regulated entertainment. These licensed premises are dispersed across the district with unsurprising accumulations around the town centres.
- 1.3 It was recognised by the committee that the night time economy, and in particular the use of alcohol, has a wide impact. In particular, it was noted that services provided by partners, including the police and health service, provide both immediate and long term preventative responses to NTE issues which help make East Herts a safe place.

2.0 Report

The police

- 2.1 As part of the council's continued work with partners to maintain public safety, the police were invited to present to the Licensing Committee on the impact of alcohol use on their services. Sergeant Clare Ramirez of East Herts police gave a presentation to the Licensing Committee on 15 November 2017.
- 2.2 Sergeant Ramirez reported that while incidents and crimes with a link to alcohol use are relatively low in East Herts as compared with other locations, they are higher over the night time in East Herts than at other times. Issues include:
 - noise and anti-social behaviour
 - fights and disorder between customers and door staff
 - assaults involving friends on nights out

- domestic incidents
- criminal damage
- drug-related arrests.

2.3 On questioning, Sergeant Ramirez reported that sexual assaults and the theft of bags and phones were lower than perhaps may be expected.

2.4 Sergeant Ramirez has shared the police's officer shift pattern with the council. Of particular note, over the weekends, the police have two shifts on duty between 10pm and 3am. On other days, the 'double shift' is only between 10pm and midnight. Sergeant Ramirez reported that this assists in maximising police officers being on duty at the times when incidents, whether related to the NTE or not, are more prevalent.

The council and police working together

2.5 The council and police share a common goal of maximising the protection and safety of the public. Alcohol use can be an obstacle to this so both parties are working together to mitigate its impact.

2.6 One particularly good example of this is that the Community Scrutiny Committee, when meeting in March 2017, endorsed the exploration of the role of Scannet Live ID. This is a piece of equipment which, when installed on the doors of late night entertainment establishments, can assist security staff identify fake ID and flag up those banned from the establishment and/or other venues. The council's ASB Officer has worked with the police to gather the views of the licensed trade and the public regarding the introduction of Scannet Live ID; there is considerable support. A bid is currently being prepared for funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Safety fund for financial support with the introduction of this system at late night bars and clubs in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford. The deadline for the bid is 22 December 2017. We would anticipate hearing if we are successful early in 2018.

2.7 In addition, the council and police work with local licence holders on the Pub Watch scheme. This covers four out of the five towns in East Herts with a total of 62 members. Bishop's Stortford has the highest membership with 21 venues signed up, Hertford with

19, Ware with 17, and Sawbridgeworth with five. Currently, there is no Pub Watch coverage in Buntingford.

- 2.8 Pub Watch has been running for approximately ten years and those involved in the scheme meet monthly with the police and the council to share intelligence with the aim to reduce crime related to the night time economy. In addition, Pub Watch allows those signed up to communicate between venues through the use of radios and private Whatsapp conversations.
- 2.9 More specifically, the Behave or Be Banned (BOBB) Scheme is an example of a successful Pub Watch initiative where individuals are banned from premises if they commit anti-social behaviour. On average there are between 100 – 120 individuals on the BOBB scheme at any one time banned from one or all licensed premises in a town centre.

Other actions to mitigate the impact of alcohol use on crime and disorder

- 2.10 In recognition of the growing night time economy in both Hertford and Bishop's Stortford and the residential growth in the town centres, officers have been asked to draft a position statement regarding licensing decision-making related to the night time economy. This will be incorporated into a review and revision of the council's statutory Statement of Licensing Policy. It is anticipated that a first draft will have been produced by the end of January 2018. This will build on the Statement of Licensing Policy with officers looking to more clearly outline:
- who the relevant 'stakeholders' are, going beyond responsible authorities alone, and what should their reasonable expectations be of the licensing process
 - the Licensing Team's expectations of how the responsible authorities could make their representations so as to make decision-making as transparent and robust as possible
 - triggers for enforcement action
 - an articulation of the benefits of well-run licensed premises to the district – economic and cultural/entertainment
 - how the council will proactively support best practice in the night time economy, for example, by promoting the use of Live ID and making best use of CCTV.
- 2.11 Officers can further update Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress against the issues covered at the Community Scrutiny committee earlier this year as follows:

- **Licensing enforcement** - the collective capacity of the 52 main licensed premises in Hertford, Bishop's Stortford and Ware is estimated by the police at 10,891 persons. The co-location of the council's licensing enforcement team and Herts police officers dedicated to enforcement activity is unique in Hertfordshire. Premises are visited with varying frequencies depending on need, scale of an issue, if changes have been made to a license, or through a request for a new application. Enforcement operations take place four times a year carrying out unannounced checks, with additional reactive operations taking place in response to issues when they arise
- **Taxi marshalling** – the police are very supportive of the work of Hertford Town Council and Bishop's Stortford Town Council to instigate taxi marshalling in their town centres. Since the previous committee meeting, Bishop's Stortford Town Council and East Herts Council have been able to identify funding, matched by Hertfordshire County Council, to run a taxi marshalling scheme in that town for the weekends of December 2017 plus Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve
- **CCTV** – the planned review of CCTV coverage and equipment has commenced. Since last reporting it has been identified that consultation needs to be held with the applicable town councils. This is likely to commence early in the new year
- **Purple Flag accreditation** – members of the Community Scrutiny committee endorsed exploration of the benefits of Purple Flag accreditation, given the commitment of East Herts Council and its many partners to maximising the safe enjoyment of the district's thriving night time economy. The Purple Flag is an accreditation process similar to the Green Flag award for parks and the Blue Flag for beaches. It is operated by the Association of Town and City Centre Management. Officers are currently prioritising work on the review of the Statement of Licensing Policy, the Scannet Live ID bid and the review of CCTV before moving on to consider Purple Flag accreditation in more detail.

3.0 Summary and recommendations

- 3.1 In summary, the police have raised that alcohol use is likely to be a key contributory factor in crime and disorder, particularly during the night time economy as opposed to at other times.
- 3.2 The police and the council share a desire to maintain relatively low levels of crime and disorder in the district and, more specifically, to mitigate the worse effects of alcohol use. To that

end, both agencies are working together to bid to the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Safety fund for financial support with the introduction of the Scannet Live ID system at late night bars and clubs in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford.

- 3.3 Council officers are also carrying out work to review and revise the council's Statement of Licensing Policy, specifically with regard to providing clearer guidance about the process of applying for a licensed premises licence, or a variation to an existing one, as well as reviewing CCTV use and wherever possible promoting activities to maximise safety, such as taxi marshalling schemes.
- 3.4 Members are invited to note the police's views and work underway by the police and council and pass on to the Head of Housing and Health their views on how to mitigate the impacts of alcohol use on crime and disorder, along with issues for consideration in the upcoming review of the Statement of Licensing Policy.
- 3.5 It is also proposed that members receive a further report once the Licensing Committee has been given a presentation on the impact of alcohol use on health services by officers of Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team.
- 4.0 **Implications/Consultations**
- 4.1 Relevant information can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None

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