

# **COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

8<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2011

## **ALCOHOL, VIOLENCE AND THE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY POLICY REVIEW**

### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP3: SAFE CITY**

**CORPORATE PRIORITIES: C101: Delivering Customer Focussed Services, C102: Being 'One Council', C103: Efficient and Effective Council, C104: Improving partnership working to deliver 'One City'**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide an overview to the Scrutiny Committee on Northumbria Police responses to alcohol related violence in the City Centre.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The key objective in the Northumbria Policing Plan for 2008-2011 is 'to build trust and confidence in the community and reduce crime and disorder'.
- 2.2 Sunderland City Centre has a vibrant night time economy, with 191 licensed premises consisting of a mix of restaurants, takeaways, pubs and nightclubs. The main nights that have been identified as being problematic for crime and disorder linked to problem premises are Fridays, Saturdays and Mondays.
- 2.3 The Home Office defines violent crime as robbery, sexual offences, and a group of Violence against the Person offences ranging from assault without injury, through wounding, to homicide.
- 2.4 Violent Crime in Sunderland is reducing overall, figures for the period April January 2011 show a reduction of 6.5% (a reduction of 235 fewer victims) compared with the same period for 2009.
- 2.5 Within Sunderland Area Command there have been 176 crimes of Most Serious Violence (MSV) for the year to date (April 2010 – January 2011) which represents an increase of 6.7% on last year. This has been reduced from an increase of approximately 30% earlier last year. Most Serious Violence represents 6% of all violent crime.

### 3.0 Night Time Economy Police Activity

In a bid to make the City even safer Sunderland Area Command has committed resources to police the City Centre. Key operations to tackle alcohol and violent crime include:

a) Operation Barracuda

Throughout February and March 2010, a hard hitting police operation focussed on license holders in the city. As well as carrying out additional visits to licensed premises, extra officers were on patrol to stamp down on crime and disorder linked to the night time economy.

The operation resulted in 121 licensed premises visited within Sunderland Area Command, predominantly within the City Centre, Coalfields and Washington areas. Operation Barracuda also involved agencies such as the Border Agency, Trading Standards, and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

The Operation was hailed a success and now runs intermittently over weekends.

b) Operation Calculate

Inspections were carried out under Operation Barracuda identified premises where under 18s were found within the premises consuming alcohol.

As a result of Operation Barracuda, evidence was gathered with regard to under 18s on licensed premises. An operation was instigated using young persons to undertake test purchases of alcohol. The test purchasing resulted in prosecutions.

All premises identified as selling to the Test Purchase Operatives have attended Gillbridge Police Station to be given guidance and advice on how to make sure it doesn't happen again. Premises concerned were given a formal warning.

c) Operation Jaws

Research has revealed a potentially dangerous interaction between cocaine and alcohol when taken together. The two drugs are converted by the body into a third drug named cocaethylene. Side effects of this drug include an increase in aggressive and risk taking behaviour.

Operation Jaws consists of a Sergeant and Police Constables visiting licensed premises in the City Centre to support door supervisors in preventing use of illicit drugs on licensed premises. The operation also allows Police Inspectors to test for drugs on arrest.

d) Operation Guardian

The key focus of this operation is to provide engagement and reassurance via officers on foot during the main periods of the night time economy at

key identified points. The primary objective is early intervention through a firm, friendly policing style.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

- 4.1 Members are recommended to note the content of this report as evidence on as part of the review.

#### **Background Papers**

- **Northumbria Police Strategy for 2008-2011**