

At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 6TH JULY, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Heron in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Copeland, Ellis, Emerson, Maddison, Scaplehorn, J. Scott, Timmins and J. Walton.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor O'Connor.

Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 8th June 2010

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 8th June, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

Alcohol, Violence and the Night Time Economy Policy Review 2010/11: Draft Scoping Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to put forward proposals and seek agreement from Members in relation to the forthcoming policy review into Alcohol, Violence and the Night Time Economy.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to the evidence gathering, Councillor Copeland enquired if Members wished for a site visit of the City Centre to look at the Night Time Economy, would it be at the busiest times.

Stuart Douglass, Safer Communities Manager, advised that a Friday or Saturday would be the best days for a site visit. Any possible times could be arranged after

discussions with the Police over the safest options and Members could also view City Centre activity through the CCTV Centre.

Councillor John Scott commented that in order for the Committee to get a true reflection, the visit needed to be at the busiest times to engage with the public that were affected.

Mr. Douglass advised that consideration was needed on how to conduct the visit safely.

The Chairman advised that the Committee needed to be responsible and consider the safety of the public, therefore that judgement should be based on the advice of the Police.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that during a recent visit in Washington, the Police had advised against the Councillors consulting at the busiest times and they had viewed footage through the CCTV cameras.

Councillor Ellis agreed with Councillor Scott, that to get a true reflection, consultation was required during the busiest times and if it was safe enough for members of the public it should be safe enough for the Councillors.

Councillor J. Walton informed the Committee of a Licensing Committee visit of the City Centre undertaken 2-3 years ago and that it had given a good insight into the situation.

Councillor Emerson acknowledged the benefits of looking into the issue but queried whether members of the public would want to be questioned by Councillors when on a night out.

Councillor J. Walton advised that the engagement from youths was very good during the Licensing visit.

Charlotte Burnham, Head of Overview and Scrutiny, advised that there was a number of possibilities that could be pursued and proposed officers look at all options/dates and bring them back to the Committee for consideration.

Councillor J. Scott raised concerns after a recent visit to Cardiff to see how they worked together around the issue of City Centre violence and how the Council, Police, Fire Brigade met monthly and engaged with the public, yet Sunderland's City Centre Management Team consisted of only one person.

Mr. Douglass advised that whilst there was only one person in the City Centre Management Team, there were a whole range of people who had specific City Centre responsibilities and that looking at other cities was a good idea, of which Cardiff would be visiting Sunderland to view good practice.

In relation to Section 7 of the report and funding from the dedicated Overview and Scrutiny budget, Ms. Burnham advised that the Committee had a revenue stream of £10,000 to fund expert advice, site visits, etc.

In response to Councillor Ball's query, Ms. Burnham advised that the Committee did not spend all of their budget last year and would confirm how much was spent at a future meeting. Ms. Burnham also advised that collectively over all of the Scrutiny Committees, there had been an underspend.

In response to Councillor Ball's query, Tom Terrett, Trading Standards and Licensing Manager, advised that all door supervisors require a license which Police regularly enforce through visits.

In relation to the membership of the Task and Finish Groups, Claire Harrison, Assistant Scrutiny Officer, will contact all members of the Committee when the first Task and Finish Group meeting is arranged.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- i) Members discussed and agreed the scope of the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee's policy review for 2010/11 as outlined in the report.
- ii) Members will be informed of the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group and should then contact the Scrutiny Officer if they wish to sit on the membership of the Group, which would focus on licensing policy and enforcement.

Review of the Council's Licensing Policy Statement

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek the views of Members upon the Council's draft Licensing Policy Statement under the Licensing Act 2003 in association with their policy review of Alcohol, Violence and the Night Time Economy.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor J. Walton commented on the section of the Policy 'The Cumulative Impact of a Concentration of Licensed Premises' and suggested the wording be altered to reflect a more anticipatory approach to the issue.

Mr. Terrett advised that he would investigate the matter with Chief Solicitors further and come back to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor J. Scott commented that the saturation of venues was causing problems and the Council should have something in place to enable them to say enough is enough.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that many of the fast food establishments on the industrial estates in Washington were also selling alcohol, which was causing littering. Councillor Scaplehorn urged we move away from calling these areas industrial estates as they were more retail areas and enquired if the Council had any powers to stop people from selling from these premises.

Mr. Terrett advised that all establishments needed a license, once they had this, the Council still carried out inspection visits and if a certain establishment was causing problems it could be called in for review.

Mr. Terrett also advised that if a certain premise was causing a public nuisance etc, conditions could be imposed such as requiring extra signage, waste bins. If the problems were due to specific times, premises hours of business could be curtailed and should Members have any problems with a particular area, they could contact the Licensing Section to investigate further.

In respect of Section 5 of the Policy 'The Need for Licensed Premises', Councillor Timmins commented that as Members could not judge on need, the whole issue needed to be tackled in partnership with Planning as unless the rules were laid out, people could apply anywhere.

Councillor Scaplehorn queried the reporting of issues through the 101 number and how these were not being relayed to the Police.

Mr. Terrett advised that he had regular meetings with the Police and he would speak to them to find out what more could be done. If the 101 complaints related to noise etc. these would get picked up by the Environmental Health Team.

In relation to Section 4.3 of the Policy, Councillor Copeland enquired if the off licences would also be expected to take responsible steps to prevent the occurrence of crime and disorder and public nuisance immediately outside their premises.

Mr. Terrett advised that under normal circumstances the expectation was that alcohol would not be consumed at an off licence but if there was a severe problem at a particular premise, it would be possible for measures to be put in place.

3. RESOLVED that Members' comments on the draft Licensing Policy be taken into consideration.

Tackling Serious Youth Violence

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an overview and presentation on the Serious Youth Violence Crime Programme.

(For copy report and presentation – see original minutes).

Ian Stephenson, Home Office Advisor, presented the report and was on hand to answer Members' queries.

In response to a query from Councillor Ellis, Mr. Stephenson advised that the statistics were gathered from every source available, with crime data being key but also looking at information from authorities in relation to Health, Licensing etc.

Councillor Copeland enquired if they had received records from the hospitals in relation to incidents of GBH.

Mr. Stephenson advised that the Accident and Emergency Department in Cardiff had started collecting assault related data, this was then promoted nationally but was something Sunderland was already doing.

Councillor Maddison enquired how much of the knife crime in Sunderland was gang related.

Mr. Stephenson advised that knife crime in the North East was very low and that most cases tended to be through domestic violence.

The Chairman commented that the likes of London, Birmingham and Manchester had incidents of gang related knife crime, whereas Sunderland did not and queried if it was due to education.

Mr. Stephenson commented that the issues in other areas could be down to the culture of drugs and territories, whilst the culture in the North East of drinking tended to be the main source of violence.

Councillor Ellis commented that the statistics depended on how the Police reported incidents and informed the Committee that a family member had been attacked with a knife, yet it was recorded as affray.

Mr. Stephenson commented that there may have been a number of reasons why that particular incident was recorded as it was, and it may be best that the Police answer that query.

In response to Councillor Scaplehorn's query, Mr. Douglass advised that he was not aware of many racially aggravated assaults but they were very low numbers and suggested specific data could be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman enquired if the education of young people through schools and scouts etc. was having an effect.

Mr. Douglass advised that the Police had carried out a programme through the schools on the prevention of knife crime. Mr. Douglass also commented that it was important this preventative work be carried out so that young people realise what the consequences could be if they carry knives.

The Chairman commented that the statistics on knife crime in the City were low and enquired if the Council was doing something different to other authorities. The Chairman also commented that he would like to see the programme on educating young people be continued.

Mr. Douglass advised that Sunderland had provided a whole range of things to avoid knife crime including offering preventative/diversionary services.

The Chairman commented that the LMAPs was one of the best vehicles the Police had for intelligence sharing in Sunderland and enquired if it was as successful in other areas of the country.

Mr. Stephenson commented that the LMAPs do work well and the Home Office always asks areas to link in LMAPs to the Tackling Knives Action Programme. In relation to education programmes, Sunderland has been ahead of the game and the Home Office also had programmes available.

The Chairman commented that it may be worth looking at the programmes as part of the scoping report to pull together all available resources.

4. RESOLVED that the presentation and report be noted.

Poverty of Place

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy attached) to highlight to the Committee the current research as regards poverty of place in relation to understanding community safety and the relationship with community cohesion.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Les Platt, Senior Policy Officer (Diversity) presented the report and requested Members' consideration of site visits.

The Chairman proposed the afternoon of Tuesday, 27th July as a possible date for any site visit.

Ms. Harrison advised that she would email Members with confirmation of dates, times and locations.

5. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Centre for Public Scrutiny 8th Annual Conference – Feedback

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide verbal feedback from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) 8th Annual Conference that was held on 30th June and 1st July, 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Copeland attended the event and gave the Committee an update on what occurred. Councillor Copeland also felt that Sunderland should have applied for the awards ceremonies as they could have won with a number of projects such as the Polycarbonate Glass Scheme. These ideas needed to be put forward to put Sunderland on the map.

Ms. Burnham advised that she had accompanied Members to the Conference with the message being, for the repositioning of Scrutiny to find ways that don't incur costs in this current economic climate.

Ms. Burnham also commented that Sunderland had made significant strides in its Scrutiny function but the decision was taken not to apply for awards as Scrutiny was on a developmental journey, but Ms. Burnham took on board Councillor Copeland's comments.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1 July 2010 – 31 October 2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1 July – 31 October 2010 which relate to the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Work Programme 2010-11

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing for Members' information the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2010-11 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Copeland informed the Committee of a recent operation between the Police and Trading Standards in identifying off licences selling alcohol to the underage and believed if we could tackle this issue, we could cut the incidents of anti social behaviour almost overnight.

The Chairman commented that the legislative process would come under the consideration of the Licensing Committee.

Ms. Burnham advised that the Committee could look at the findings of that particular operation through the Policy Review if Members so wished.

8. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) R. HERON,
Chairman.