

# **COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR REVIEW – POLYCARBONATE GLASSES**

### **LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME:POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**7 JULY 2009**

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

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide analysis and feedback from the city centre pilot into polycarbonate drinking vessels.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 On 15 July 2009, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to include in its work programme a report on the outcome of the city centre pilot on the introduction of polycarbonate drinking vessels.
- 2.2 Tackling alcohol misuse and the harm it causes, including alcohol related crime is also a key strategic priority under the 'safe city' priority of the Sunderland Strategy and Local Area Agreement.
- 2.3 The Scrutiny has already agreed to undertake a study into anti social behaviour and alcohol and this report will contribute to the final report of the Committee.

#### **3 Current Position**

- 3.1 The Safer Sunderland Partnership (SSP) has a strategic priority to tackle alcohol misuse and the harm it causes, including alcohol related crime. As part of its delivery plan it has put in place a number of interventions to address this, one of which has been the introduction of a polycarbonate glasses pilot scheme. The pilot initiative has been running in Sunderland city centre since September 2008 and was introduced to ensure a safer city centre by reducing the chance of injuries by glass.
- 3.2 City Centre Management provided the lead for this 5 month pilot city centre initiative, in partnership with SSP, including Northumbria Police and the City Council's licensing section.
- 3.3 A report has been prepared by the City Centre Manager which sets out the feedback and analysis from the pilot study. Details from this report is set out below.

- 3.4 The pilot involved the purchase of nearly 20,000 super-strength plastic safety glasses which would be tested in five city centre venues. The polycarbonate drinking vessels provide the modern equivalent to glasses. They are made from the same sort of plastic used in crash helmets and can take the weight of a small car without breaking and show only a slightly squashed appearance. This greatly reduces the chance of injuries caused by accidents with glass. In busy bars and clubs, glasses can and do get knocked over or chipped so this virtually unbreakable and shatter-proof plastic means the chances of accidental injuries are greatly reduced.
- 3.5 The new drink ware also helps to keep drinks cool and are 100 per cent recyclable. Although drunken disputes involving glass were rare in the city centre, the Police were keen to support this pilot initiative because it helps to keep the city safe and prevents serious injury when the small numbers of disputes result in violence.
- 3.6 It was hoped that the bars and clubs would also make longer term savings by switching to the polycarbonate glasses as it was anticipated that the number of breakages would reduce because the glasses last up to four times longer.
- 3.7 Five premises took part in the pilot: These premises were:
- The Point's Union Bar,
  - The Glass Spider,
  - Liquid,
  - Passion and
  - Blu Bamboo
- 3.8 The premises were approached to be part of the pilot scheme as they were some of the largest bars and clubs in the city centre and tended to have the latest operating hours.
- 3.9 The initiative cost in the region of £12,000 and the costs were shared on a 50 – 50 basis between the individual premises and the Safer Sunderland Partnership. This initiative was part funded by the SSP and the pilot has now concluded.

#### **4 Pilot Feedback and Analysis**

- 4.1 With the conclusion of the pilot phase of this initiative some research and analysis has been undertaken to determine the success or otherwise of the scheme and its benefits. This research and statistical analysis has been undertaken with consumers, the licensees and the Police.
- 4.2 A questionnaire survey was carried out at the end of January 2009 with consumers. Indications are that the project has gone very well. Over 186 people were interviewed at a range of locations concentrating in and around the 5 pilot premises but also including non participating premises. There has been overwhelming support for the scheme from the public. Some of the key findings are that:

- Over half of the people interviewed (103 people) said they were already aware of the scheme in Sunderland. Of these, 85% said the scheme made them feel safer.
- 85% of those who hadn't heard of the scheme thought it was a good idea (with only 2 people thinking it was a bad idea)
- 86% (160 people) said it wouldn't bother them to drink out of a polycarbonate glass and around the same number said there would not be any circumstance where they would refuse a polycarbonate glass.

The public have said they like the scheme because there are less risks of standing on broken glass and less risk of people being glassed. The majority think the scheme is a great idea that will make drinking much safer.

4.3 Feedback from the licensees also indicates that the scheme has worked really well with at least one of the licensees quoting *"I think it's a fantastic idea and crime and disorder has totally dropped for the company, such schemes as these make you realise the power of plastic. Take away the problem and a solution will occur the cure."* Some of the main findings were:

- All of the participating premises said staff and customers felt safer with the use of polycarbonate glasses
- All of the participating premises noticed a significant reduction in breakages and related injuries – saving a minimum of £300 per month per venue and at least one venue reduced breakages by 100% by implementing a fully polycarbonate drink ware policy
- All of the participating premises reported that that they were unaware of any customers refusing to use polycarbonate glasses
- All of the participating premises reported noticing differences in the pubs where the pilot scheme was running – these differences included spillages and glass on the floor was virtually absent, and incidents and injuries were reduced
- 3 of the 5 participating premises are looking to expand their range of polycarbonate glasses
- All of the participating premises will continue to use the polycarbonate glasses in their premises and would recommend polycarbonate glasses to another licensee.

## **4 Proposal or Options for Consideration**

- 5.1 The pilot scheme has been very successful from all partner aspects. The pilot venues have declared their intention to continue using polycarbonate glasses and a number of other venues have subsequently asked about the scheme and how they could get involved.
- 5.2 The next steps for the scheme include partners making a decision as to the extent and future role out of the scheme including:
  - Should it be expanded to include all city centre licensed venues
  - Should it be expanded city wide
  - The resources required to encourage licensed premises to participate
  - Is funding available to part fund the initial purchase of polycarbonate glasses as per the pilot scheme (was initially offered on a 50-50 basis).
- 5.3 In addition to the five pilot premises there is a further fifty plus pub, club or bar premises in the city centre. The cost of extending the polycarbonate glass scheme to these establishments is in the region of £80,000, of which 50% would be match funded by the individual premises.
- 5.4 There is currently no legal or licensing requirement for licensed premises to use polycarbonate glasses so there is no indication at this stage of the number of premises who would wish to become part of an extended scheme. However, the pilot scheme within the city centre has been discussed at Pubwatch meetings so an initial awareness is in existence.
- 5.5 Restrictions could be added to the original scheme to ensure a wider geographical area for participation, for example an extended scheme could be offered on a first-come basis and in that way extended to licensed premises within the City as a whole. An alternative would be to introduce restrictions to the value or quality of an order such as restricting the quantity/value of glasses available through the scheme based on the capacity of each venue, or a restriction placed on the model (quality) of polycarbonate glass available to purchase through the scheme. By adding such restrictions the scheme may be extended to include some premises outside of the city centre boundary.
- 5.6 The national quality award Best Bar None recognises the value of polycarbonate glasses in a licensed venue as 'desirable' and awards bonus points for an applicant.
- 5.7 The findings of the pilot scheme will be announced and discussed at a forthcoming Pubwatch meeting.

## **6 Impact**

- 6.1 Northumbria Police report that with the removal of “glasses” from the five pilot venues they have seen the removal of “glassings” in the same venue. This supports their overarching objective with a success rate of 100%.
- 6.2 They also add that taking into account the period August 2008 to March 2009 against the same period 2007-2008 the police have seen a 70% reduction in people being assaulted with glasses in the City Centre.
- 6.3 From a policing perspective the fact that the glass products have been replaced with polycarbonate alternatives means the opportunity to commit such an offence has been reduced. The pilot has therefore been a complete success and the Police would firmly encourage the extension to include other (indeed all) of the pubs and clubs within the City.
- 6.4 The pilot scheme has attracted a great deal of media interest and coverage. The PR value of this scheme has not been fully evaluated to date as it is still ongoing. However, it is estimated that it is currently valued in excess of £25,000 (non-paid for media coverage) and new media and trade related releases on the conclusion of the scheme are being planned.

## **7 Recommendations**

- 7.1 Members are asked to consider the report and comment on the future of the scheme.

## **8. Background Papers**

Safer Sunderland Strategy

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