

At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 8TH JUNE, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Heron in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Copeland, Emmerson, Maddison, Scaplehorn, Timmins and J. Walton.

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Tate.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Ellis, O'Connor and John Scott.

Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 20th April, 2010

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 20th April, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

Annual Work Programme and Policy Review 2010-11

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) for Members to determine the Annual Work Programme for the Scrutiny Committee during 2010-11, including the main theme for a detailed policy review.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Claire Harrison, Acting Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and advised of the suggested topics for Policy Review/Task and Finish Groups, as detailed in paragraph 3.5.

Stuart Douglass, Safer Communities Manager, gave a brief overview of each of the suggested topics which included Violent Crime Reduction, Alcohol Related Crime in the City Centre and Community Safety: Diversionary activities for young people.

The Chairman commented that many Members had intimated at the Scrutiny Conference of the wish to look at the Licensing Act/Premises License.

Tom Terrett, Trading Standards and Licensing Manager, summarised the work of the Licensing Section and advised that they were currently commencing the consultation process on the next draft of the Council's Licensing Policy which would be sent to Cabinet and full Council and suggested the Policy also be sent to all Members for consideration.

Mr. Terrett also commented that Alcohol and Violence had always been related and a number of issues were around the gaining of intelligence, how it was received/ reported.

Councillor Copeland enquired as to how and when residents find out if a local shop or off licence is applying for their license to be re-issued.

Mr. Terrett advised that legally, the shops do not need to renew their licenses once they have been issued unless they were changing the conditions, such as requesting to extend their hours of operation and so on. If this occurs, there is a 28 day consultation period.

Mr. Terrett also advised of certain safeguards in the issuing of a license. From January 2010, Members can request a review of a Premises License if problems have occurred. If Members have concerns, they should speak to the Licensing Section and the Police as early as possible so that evidence can be gathered.

Councillor Ball raised concerns in relation to the photographs published in the Sunderland Echo of nights on the town, as on a number of occasions the youths were consuming alcohol and were underage. Councillor Ball enquired if anything could be done to tackle the issue.

Mr. Terrett commented that the profile of the City Centre had changed with Mondays being student night. It was found there had been many incidents of underage drinking. There had been an increase of crime on Monday nights and a recent Police initiative had been conducted to tackle the underage drinking, with some reviews of Premises Licenses forthcoming.

Mr. Terrett also advised that there may be plans for similar initiatives this year also.

The Chairman commented that the landlords should be more aware when selling alcohol to youths.

Mr. Terrett informed the Committee of a new condition which requires age checks on anyone who appears under the age of 18 by the licensee and the Licensing Act was continually being toughened up.

Councillor Emmerson enquired on the gathering of evidence and if test purchases were extended to off licences.

Mr. Terrett advised that test purchases had been carried out for many years and that 26 visits to off licenses had been undertaken in the last year.

Mr. Terrett also commented that much of the alcohol young people obtained was not directly from the seller, but from family members or older friends, which was difficult to deal with from a licensing aspect.

Councillor J. Walton commented that topics 1 and 2, Violent Crime Reduction and Alcohol Related Crime in the City Centre, were interlinked and could be coupled together as one item.

Mr. Douglass commented that the scope of the review could include Violent Crime and City Centre sale of alcohol and licensing and that this could be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman proposed that the Task and Finish Groups be held early afternoons.

Ms. Harrison suggested that consideration be given to the Task and Finish Groups at the next meeting of the Committee which would deal with the scope of the review.

The Chairman also advised that consideration could be given to the diversionary activities and facilities available for youths.

Councillor Copeland gave the example of Southwick Community School which had fantastic play facilities but was closed to youths after school hours.

2. RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- i) considered the draft Annual Work Programme for 2010-11;
- ii) considered the list of suggestions for policy review and determined the Violent Crime and alcohol topic for review;
- iii) the Work Programme be submitted to the Management Scrutiny Committee in its co-ordinating role.

Request to Attend Conference – Centre for Public Scrutiny 8th Annual Conference and Exhibition

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) for the Committee to consider nominating delegates to the Centre for Public Scrutiny's 8th Annual Conference and Exhibition to be held on 30 June – 1 July 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

3. RESOLVED that the Committee agreed for Councillor Heron to attend the Centre for Public Scrutiny Conference, to be funded from the budget of the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee, who would be accompanied by one representative from each of the Scrutiny Committees along with the Head of Overview and Scrutiny.

Forward Plan – Key decisions for the period 1 June 2010 – 30 September 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 June – 30 September 2010 which relate to the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

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

(Signed) R. HERON,
Chairman.