

At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 7TH JULY, 2009 AT 5.30 P.M.

Present:-

Councillor B. Heron in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Copeland, Paul Maddison, D. Smith, Timmins, Wake and J. Walton.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors O'Connor, Scaplehorn and Speding.

Minutes of the last meeting held on 15th June, 2009

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 15th June, 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no interests declared.

Anti Social Behaviour Review – Polycarbonate Glasses

The Chief Executive submitted a report and addendum (copies circulated) to provide Members with the analysis and feedback from the City Centre pilot into polycarbonate drinking vessels.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Leanne Davis, Drug and Alcohol Strategy Manager and Inspector Jackie Clarke of Northumbria Police presented the report.

Inspector Clarke informed the Committee that there was not a major problem with glass related incidents in Sunderland but introducing polycarbonated glasses would help to reduce risk and the fear of crime.

Ms. Davis advised that the potential costs incurred to roll out the scheme across all City Centre establishments would be in the region of £80,000.

It was hoped to encourage the use of polycarbonate glasses through the Best Bar None Scheme which recognises socially responsible premises.

Four of the premises that had partaken in the use of the glasses had won awards through the Best Bar None Scheme.

Inspector Clarke also commented that the Scheme would help impact on other areas such as safety of employees and also reduce the number of injuries that occur due to broken glass.

Councillor Timmins commented that many venues also catered for children, so any scheme which cut the risk of injury was an excellent idea.

Councillor Wake commented that the introduction of the glasses would be a win/win situation but was surprised that the Council and its partners were expected to provide 50% of the funding.

Ms. Davis advised that the polycarbonate glasses were more expensive for an initial outlay but once establishments were on board, money would be saved long term.

Inspector Clarke agreed that most pubs should fund the scheme themselves, but to enable maximum participation during the current financial situation, the initial outlay from the Council could encourage establishments to join.

In response to Councillor Copeland's query, Ms. Davis advised that of the big chains, Wetherspoons and Yates' currently use the polycarbonate glasses but that this had not been rolled out nationally.

Councillor Copeland suggested sponsorship by the breweries on the glasses to cover the costs of implementing the Scheme.

Councillor D. Smith enquired if investigations had been made into the hygiene of using the glasses as they are made from organic materials.

Norma Johnston, Assistant Head of Environmental Services, advised that no investigations had been made and that she was of the belief the glasses could be treated with the same standards as the regular glasses but Ms. Johnston would look into the issue.

Councillor Paul Maddison suggested that for any Council hospitality events, there should be an insistence to use polycarbonate glasses in order to set an example.

The Chairman commented that thankfully the City had few incidents of glassing but there was always a risk that such incidents could occur. He suggested the Safer City Partnership be encouraged to kick start the Scheme in the City Centre with a view to expanding to outlying areas.

The Chairman also suggested investigations be made into the affordability of the Scheme and for the issue to be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the issue of funding the introduction of polycarbonate glasses in City Centre venues be investigated further and brought back to a future meeting of the Committee;
- (ii) the report be received and noted.

Policy Development and Review 2009/10 – Scope

The Chief Executive submitted a report and addendum (copies circulated) to put forward proposals and seek agreement from Members in relation to the forthcoming policy review into anti social behaviour and alcohol.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Stuart Douglass, Safer Communities Manager, presented the report and advised that the Safer Sunderland Annual Forum would be held in October at the Stadium of Light, where the board Members would take queries from the public.

Mr. Douglass suggested that the public evidence could be brought to a future meeting and also the current draft of the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy for consideration.

Norma Johnston, Assistant Head of Environmental Services, advised of a meeting with the Home Office on the new Code of Practice in improving the situation on the enforcement of controls on the sale and consumption of alcohol. It was suggested a report be brought to the September meeting of the Committee.

Councillor J. Walton enquired as to who all the co-operating bodies were, mentioned under paragraph 5.2

Mr. Douglass advised that the report listed the suggested bodies that were involved in key areas of Sunderland and that a clearer, more defined list of partners could be provided to Councillors at the next meeting.

Ms. Johnston advised of the problem regarding off licences and supermarkets selling alcohol resulting in people drinking before they enter the City Centre.

Councillor Copeland informed the Committee on the Probation Service's new programme for people involved in anti social behaviour and suggested the Scheme be monitored.

Councillor Copeland also commented that the alcohol exclusion zones introduced in Brighton were working and suggested the proposal be looked at along with other issues.

Mr. Douglass commented that alcohol treatment requirements can be included as part of a sentence and advised that the Probation Service could be invited to a future meeting to provide an update on how the programme was working.

In relation to alcohol free zones, Mr. Douglass advised that the City does have exclusion zones. A blanket ban had been considered and decided against by the Safer Sunderland Board. However, the Committee could look into this issue further.

Councillor J. Walton commented that the current exclusion zones needed to be enforced before extending the Scheme further.

Mr. Douglass commented that it was worth clarifying that the designated locations do not prevent the drinking of alcohol, as an offence is only committed if a person continues to drink when they have been asked to stop by a Police Officer.

Councillor J. Walton enquired as to when Police Officers have the power to impose fines and prosecutions.

Mr. Douglass advised that if a Police Officer requests a member of the public to cease drinking in a designated area and they fail to do so, then it becomes an offence which they could be charged for.

Councillor D. Smith commented on the Council byelaws which made it an offence to be caught with alcohol in play areas and cemeteries, and believed the Police seemed to be reluctant to enforce.

Mr. Douglass advised that he would consult with an officer from City Solicitors on the correct interpretation of the alcohol exclusion zones and clarify at a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Timmins commented that there was a need to get all partners on board, not just the Police, such as Magistrates and so on, to make a concerted effort to address the issue.

Councillor Wake informed the Committee of several incidents where alcohol had been sold to children and expressed his disappointment over the lenient penalties that were imposed upon the premises.

Mr. Douglass commented on the close working relationship with the Magistrates' Court and advised that they could give evidence on their procedures in dealing with such offences at a future meeting of the Committee.

Ms. Johnston advised of residents' right to request reviews of premises through Licensing and Regulatory meetings and also commented that the revocation of licences by the Magistrates were more of a punishment than financial penalties.

Councillor Wake commented that there was an ongoing issue in Washington with off licences selling alcohol to children.

Tom Terrett, Trading Standards and Licensing Manager, advised that it was not always the fault of the off licence as many cases involve adults buying the alcohol for children.

In relation to the lenient fines, Mr. Terrett commented that these would most likely be fixed penalties issued by the Police and not the Magistrates' Court.

Councillor Copeland commented that there had been a problem for a number of years with youths drinking on the streets and enquired where the Police stood in being able to confiscate alcohol.

Mr. Douglass advised that Police Officers had the power to move those people who were believed to be causing or about to cause a problem and suggested that clarification of powers could be included in the Designated Places report.

3. RESOLVED that the scope of the review be agreed and that the Committee receive additional evidence from the Safer Sunderland Forum scheduled for 23rd October at the Stadium of Light.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the period of 1st July – 31st October, 2009

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st July – 31st October, 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman requested Members' views on the Committee continuing to receive the Forward Plan on a regular basis.

Councillor Copeland enquired on the siting of the proposed development of a supported housing unit for people who misuse alcohol, mentioned within the Forward Plan.

The Chairman advised that the siting had not been established yet and a report would be brought to Committee at a later date.

Having considered the Forward Plan, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the Committee continue to receive the Forward Plan on a regular basis.

Work Programme 2009-10

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy attached) to inform Members of the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2009-10 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

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

(Signed) B. HERON,
Chairman.