

At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Heron in the Chair

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

Apologies for Absence

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

Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 14th September, 2010

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 14th September, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

The Neighbourhood Helpline

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an overview of the work of the Neighbourhood Helpline and to contribute to the Committee's study into alcohol related violence in the City Centre.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Liz St. Louis, Head of Customer Service and Development, presented the report and was on hand to answer Members' queries.

Councillor Scaplehorn requested clarification on an issue he had raised at a previous meeting of the Committee in relation to the handing over of complaints that the helpline had received to the Police in respect of licensed premises.

Ms. St. Louis advised that any reports received by the helpline are passed to the Environmental Health Team, who determine the best course of action and liaise with the appropriate partners.

In response to Councillor J. Scott's query with regard to licensing breaches as mentioned in paragraph 3.3 of the report, Ms. St. Louis advised that these could include complaints from the public over extended opening hours and so on. These are logged with the Environmental Health Team to deal with in the appropriate manner.

Councillor J. Scott enquired if incidents of under age alcohol sales were included under the licensing breach category.

Ms. St. Louis advised that the data could be made available and provided in a future report.

In response to the Chairman's query, Ms. St. Louis advised that the category 'vandalised, damaged or in need of repair' included issues such as graffiti, damage to park benches, spray paint and such like. Ms. St. Louis also advised that these issues would be passed on to the Police.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Best Bar None 2010: Together we can create an even safer, more attractive and welcoming night time economy

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform Members of the Best Bar None scheme which provides licensed premises with the opportunity to take part in an Accreditation Scheme recognised nationally as best practice by the Home Office and the drinks industry.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Louise Hardy, City Centre Manager, presented the report and was on hand to answer Members' queries.

In response to Councillor Scaplehorn's query, Ms. Hardy advised that they were working with the Tourism Team to promote the scheme and the positive perception it creates of the area.

Councillor J. Scott enquired on the length of time the Pubwatch scheme had been running and if it was any different from the local schemes which had been launched.

Ms. Hardy advised that the City Centre scheme had been relaunched two years ago and was the same as the locally launched initiatives.

In response to Councillor Scaplehorn's request, Ms. Hardy commented that she would circulate copies of the application forms to Members to help feed into the Committees study.

The Chairman commented on the busy nature of the City Centre during the Christmas period and enquired as to how the day time shoppers merged together with the evening and night time scenes.

Ms. Hardy advised that generally the schemes complimented rather than competed against each other and with events such as the Christmas illuminations switch on, work was carried out with licensees to make sure there were enough security on and such like.

In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Ms. Hardy commented that the polycarbonate glasses scheme had been hugely successful with the Police, landlords and staff finding them beneficial.

Ms. Hardy also advised that even public perception of the glasses had been positive and six premises had continued to use them once the pilot had ended. At present there was no encouragement to use polycarbonate bottles.

The Chairman enquired if it was worth encouraging more establishments to use the polycarbonate glasses.

Ms. Hardy advised that the scheme was worth encouraging but the main problem was the cost implications to the licensees as they were one of the hardest hit sectors during this economic climate and there was the specialist cleaning equipment to consider also.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Alcohol, Violence and the Night Time Economy: Progress Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an ongoing progress report in relation to this year's policy review around Alcohol, Violence and the Night Time Economy.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Claire Harrison, Acting Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and advised the Committee of the intention to hold another meeting of the Licensing Task and Finish Group in the month of October and that a site visit of the City Centre venues would be arranged for the beginning of December.

Councillor Maddison commented that Members of the Licensing Committee had also requested a site visit and suggested a joint visit be arranged.

4. RESOLVED that Members note the progress in relation to the policy review.

Victims Champion Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an overview on key priority areas of the Victims Champion and to promote discussion, encourage support and understanding of the role.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Kirsty Swann, Victims Champion, presented the report and advised that additional funding had been secured to provide training for frontline staff and that they would continue to monitor the service provided to ensure it was tailored to the victim's needs.

Ms. Swann advised of the close work performed with the Neighbourhood helpline on data capture and any way to improve the cascading of information to teams so they can collate better statistics and prioritisation of cases.

Ms. Swann also informed the Committee of a planned event to be held in the Sunderland Civic Centre for frontline Criminal Justice Service staff to improve knowledge and understanding of a victim's journey through the Court process.

The Chairman enquired if there was any flexibility to the National Home Office risk assessment matrix for ASB.

Ms. Swann advised that there were Task Groups which considered the questions that needed to be asked and was constantly being reviewed.

In response to Councillor Maddison's query regarding a breakdown of data on ASB to Ward level, Ms. Swann advised that it could be included in the data capture from the Neighbourhood helpline and that they were also looking at collating data of offences being repeated on the same victim.

Ms. Swann also commented that they were looking for the ASB Team to work with the Neighbourhood helpline on improving the information supplied, but this would effect the length of calls taken and increase costs.

Councillor J. Scott raised concerns over the saturation of premises selling alcohol in particular areas and the protocols for dealing with complaints and evidence.

Ms. Swann suggested that more information/education could be given to residents on how they can object to licences being granted as a possible solution.

Councillor J. Scott commented that many residents do complain but if the Police did not submit representations then Members were almost powerless in the granting of applications.

Kelly Henderson, Safer Communities Officer/Violent Crime advised that she would liaise with Tom Terrett, Trading Standards and Licensing Manager, on the concerns Members had raised.

The Chairman commented that Mr. Terrett would be providing information on licensing to the task and finish group due to issues raised in a previous meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman informed of a past incident involving an elderly woman who had been burgled and installed a number of locks and chains to her door that they would have created problems should a fire occur in the property. The Chairman expressed concern if other people took such measures and how this could be dealt with by Victim Support.

Ms. Swann advised that a problem with ASB was that people started to tolerate and change their own behaviour. Most people referred by the Police would be given support and could also be referred to Adult Services so that they could return to a normal way of life. Ms. Swann also advised that it was hoped the risk assessment matrix would identify those most at risk.

The Chairman commented that he was pleased to see the introduction of Court separation so that the witnesses were kept away from the perpetrators and also praised the Sunderland Echo for their positive stories which helped deal with the perceptions in the City.

5. RESOLVED that Members note the key elements of the Victims Champion priorities and support the role in the forthcoming months.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1 October 2010 – 31 January 2011

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 October 2010 – 31 January 2011 which relate to the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to the review of the Council's Licensing Policy Statement, Councillor Scaplehorn again raised concerns that complaints received via the 101 helpline involving licensed premises were not being passed on to the Police.

Councillor Maddison agreed with Councillor J. Scott's earlier comments and stated if either the Police or Environmental Health did not submit representations on an application then the Members of the Licensing Sub-Committees were practically powerless.

Councillor Copeland commented that she was aware of many instances where complaints of ASB had been reported to the Police, yet they claimed to have no record of them, thus people stopped reporting incidents as they felt they were wasting their time.

6. RESOLVED that the Committee has considered the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1 October 2010 – 31 January 2011 and Members' commented be 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).

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

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

(Signed) R. HERON,
Chairman.