



## Community Services

Agenda Item No. 5

### Briefing Paper

Report of: Sarah Sprung (Scrutiny / Committee Officer)

Date: Wednesday, 4th February 2009

Open

## Recommendations from the Alcohol & Substance Misuse Review Panel

### 1. Summary

1.1 This briefing paper details the recommendations of the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Review Panel, following its scrutiny of the need for Alcohol Restriction Zones (ARZ's) in the district and the problems relating to underage drinking.

### 2. Background

2.1 The Alcohol and Substance Misuse Review Panel was established by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

2.2 The review panel consisted of the following members:

- i) Councillor J Baker (Chairman)
- ii) Councillor A Buckley
- iii) Councillor Mrs H E Dyke
- iv) Councillor Mrs S Hayward
- v) Councillor H J Martin
- vi) Councillor J Phillips
- vii) Councillor J Thomas
- viii) Councillor G C Yarranton

2.3 The terms of reference for the review panel were:

- i) To investigate the need for Alcohol Restriction Zones (ARZs) in the district.
- ii) To consult with all relevant partners on substance abuse problems.
- iii) To investigate fully the problems of under age drinking within the district.

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- 2.4 This report details the panel's findings in respect of points (i) and (iii) of the terms of reference.
- 2.5 Evidence gathering is still taking place in respect of point (ii) of the terms of reference. Findings in this area will be reported to a later meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.6 As part of the evidence gathering process for the review, Members have considered evidence from a range of expert witnesses:
- i) Police Divisional Intelligence Analyst
  - ii) Trading Standards (Worcestershire County Council)
  - iii) Kidderminster Licensees Association
  - iv) Chairman of Bewdley Pubwatch Scheme
  - v) Head of Property and Operational Services
  - vi) Wyre Forest District Council Licensing Section
  - vii) Worcestershire Substance Misuse Action Team
- 2.7 In addition to evidence supplied by expert witnesses the Panel has also consulted with:
- i) District Councillors
  - ii) County Councillors
  - iii) Parish Councillors
  - iv) PACT Chairmen
- 2.8 In order to gain knowledge of the evening economy in the District, Members of the panel participated in a Friday or Saturday night tour of the District with Local Policing Teams.

### 3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The highest number of recorded incidents, for alcohol related crime and anti social behaviour in the District was concentrated within the centre of the District in the Greenhill (includes Kidderminster Town Centre) and Offmore and Comberton wards.
- 3.2 Public perception of Alcohol Restriction Zones (ARZ's) was that they were alcohol free zones, meaning no alcohol could be consumed within that particular area.
- 3.3 The Police had the power to seize alcohol from individuals under 18, without an ARZ being in place.
- 3.4 Alcohol related incidents fell into two categories:
- i) Anti Social Behaviour
  - ii) Crime

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- 3.5 Alcohol related anti social behaviour was more commonly experienced by members of the public.
- 3.6 There were 594 alcohol related violent offences recorded from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008.
- 3.7 Alcohol related violence on Saturdays and Sundays accounted for 58% of all alcohol related offences.
- 3.8 As a result of the expansion of drinking times, alcohol related offences were spread out over a longer time period.
- 3.9 Anyone over the age of 18 could apply to be a licensee.
- 3.10 Attempts had been made by the Kidderminster Licensees Association to establish a liaison group that could work with supermarkets in the area.
- 3.11 There had been a 40% downturn in the trade in public houses; this could lead to licensees relaxing regulations to boost trade.
- 3.12 Trading Standards carried out test purchasing exercises with young people. The failure rate of establishments was 14%.
- 3.13 Underage purchasers were not always detected in supermarkets.
- 3.14 Underage drinkers used proxy purchasers to purchase drinks for them.
- 3.15 Many of the problems that took place within town centre areas were a result of high levels of alcohol consumption.
- 3.16 The District relied on tourism, and the establishment of ARZ's did not present a positive image of the District.
- 3.17 Cheap alcohol sold by supermarkets fuelled some alcohol related anti social behaviour as some young people were drinking supermarket bought alcohol before or after entering pubs.
- 3.18 Noise created by late night drinkers impacted on local residents.
- 3.19 ARZ's could deter the use of Council parks by families.
- 3.20 The Council should encourage the positive use of its parks and open spaces.
- 3.21 Wyre Forest District Council was accredited by West Mercia Constabulary; as a result of this 27 Council Officers had the power to seize alcohol.

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- 3.22 Perception of young people could be an issue, as some members of the public felt threatened by large groups of young people.
- 3.23 An emerging theme from the responses of PACT Chairman were issues relating to underage drinkers and alcohol related anti social behaviour.
- 3.24 There were four primary licence objectives:
- i) the prevention of crime and disorder
  - ii) the prevention of public nuisance
  - iii) the protection of children from harm
  - iv) public safety
- 3.25 If a complaint regarding licensed premises that related to crime and disorder matters was received, local residents, businesses, or the Police could call for a review of licence conditions.
- 3.26 The main problem with the evening economy was noise, which was dealt with under the Environmental Protection Act.
- 3.27 Trading Standards liaise with Licensing regarding premises to be put forward for investigation.
- 3.28 The Licensing section does comment on any planning applications received from licensed premises.
- 3.29 Worcestershire Substance Misuse Action Team (SMAT) commission an alcohol arrest referral scheme whereby anyone arrested for an alcohol related crime would be referred to the service for a brief intervention.
- 3.30 A brief intervention consisted of looking at the individual's alcohol consumption and how it impacted on their offending behaviour.
- 3.31 There were high levels of referrals to the alcohol referral scheme from Wyre Forest.
- 3.32 A county-wide alcohol needs assessment had recently been conducted, which had indicated there were issues surrounding young people and alcohol.
- 3.33 SMAT provided free bespoke training on drug and alcohol awareness.

#### **4. Recommendations to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee**

##### **4.1 To consider putting the following recommendations forward to Cabinet for approval:**

4.2 The local MP be requested to approach Government to put forward the following questions for a response from Government:

- i) Is the Government aware of the issues relating to the sale of cheap alcohol
- ii) Has the Government got any plans to tackle the sale of cheap alcohol
- iii) Has the Government any comments on the actions of retailers, such as Wetherspoons, selling cut price alcohol
- iv) Would the Government consider a blanket ban on drinking in public places
- v) Is the Government aware that many young people, under 18, do not directly purchase alcohol, but get it through proxy alcohol sales
- vi) Are there any plans to address proxy alcohol sales

4.3 No further ARZ's be created in the District as the Police have sufficient powers to control underage drinking, and the control of anti social behaviour and on street drinking could be addressed via other means.

4.4 Training on drug and alcohol awareness be made available to all District Council Members, to be provided free of charge through the Worcestershire Substance Misuse Action Team.

4.5 An education programme throughout schools and colleges be adopted, coupled with publicity in the local media to address misconceptions relating to ARZ's.

#### **5. Consultation**

5.1 County, District and Parish Councillors

5.2 PACT Chairmen

#### **6. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies**

6.1 Worcestershire Substance Misuse Strategy

#### **7. Wards affected**

7.1 District Wide

**8. Background Papers**

8.1 Minutes of the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Review Panel held on:

- i) 20<sup>th</sup> August 2008
- ii) 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008
- iii) 20<sup>th</sup> October 2008
- iv) 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008
- v) 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008
- vi) 16<sup>th</sup> December 2008
- vii) 6<sup>th</sup> January 2009
- viii) 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009

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