

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **JOINT MEETING OF THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

At a Joint Meeting of **Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees** held in **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Tuesday 29 January 2013** at **10.00 am**

#### **Present:**

**Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)**

#### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors M Hodgson, J Armstrong, B Bainbridge, D Bowman, D Brown, J Nicholson, J Turnbull, J Blakey, P Brookes, B Harrison, G Huntington, S Iveson, J Lethbridge, C Potts, R Todd, P Jopling and M Williams

#### **Co-opted Members:**

Mr A J Cooke, Ms M English, Mr M Iveson and Mr T Thompson

#### **Also Present:**

Councillors P Jopling and M Williams and Ms M Chappell

#### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Arthur, R Bell, D Burn, M Campbell, R Crooks, K Holroyd, C Magee, J Maslin, B Myers, A Savory, J Shiell, M Simmons, T Taylor, J Wilkinson, B Wilson and A Wright and Mrs B Carr, Mrs H Gibbon, Mrs R Hassoon, Mr R Patel and Mrs M Thompson.

#### **2 Substitute Members**

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

#### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

#### **4 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

There were no Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

#### **5 A Consultation on Delivering the Government's Policies to cut Alcohol Fuelled Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour**

The Chair thanked Members of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health, Children and Young People's and Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees for their attendance at this Special Joint Meeting that was to consider the Consultation on Delivering the Government's Policies to cut Alcohol Fuelled Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

The Joint Committee was introduced to the Officers and colleagues from Partner Organisations that would be presenting and facilitating during the meeting:

Feisal Jassat	-	Overview and Scrutiny Manager, Durham County Council (DCC)
Jonathan Slee	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer, DCC
Owen Cleugh	-	Consumer Protection Manager, DCC
Chief Superintendent Ivan Wood	-	Durham Constabulary
Claire Sullivan	-	Consultant in Public Health, NHS County Durham and Darlington
Colin Shevills	-	Director, Balance
Kirsty Wilkinson	-	Alcohol Harm Reduction Coordinator, DCC
Carol Payne	-	Head of Early Intervention and Partnerships, DCC
Anna Lynch	-	Director of Public Health, NHS County Durham and Darlington

The Director, Balance, Colin Shevills thanked Members for the opportunity to speak and gave a presentation on the National Alcohol Strategy Consultation (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillors noted effect that cheap alcohol made in terms of the impact on the health and economy of County Durham and issues that were driving the problem included not only price, but also availability and marketing by the alcohol industry. Members noted evidence from the World Health Organisation (WHO) as regards Health Services' responses; Community Action; Drink Driving Policies and Countermeasures; Reducing negative consequences; Reducing public health impact of illicit alcohol; and Monitoring and surveillance. The Director, Balance noted that the Government's National Alcohol Strategy Consultation included issues of a Minimum Unit Price (MUP) for alcohol; a ban on multi-buy promotions; Public Health being set as a Licensing Objective; cutting red tape; and reviewing the Code on irresponsible promotions in pubs and clubs.

The Joint Committee learned that the issue of MUP was generally supported by Publicans, with the effect of a 50p MUP being such that a pint of larger or bottle of wine would not see a rise in price, however, a bottle of "own-label" vodka would increase from £8.29 to £13.00 and a 2 litre bottle of cider would increase from £1.85 to £7.50. It was added that other organisations that supported MUP included the British Medical Association (BMA), General Practitioners (GPs), the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), the Police, the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) - Mayors' and Leaders' Group and the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA).

Members noted that 57% of the public in County Durham supported MUP and that the establishment of a MUP in Canada had led to a 20% fall in alcohol related deaths and 9% fall in alcohol related hospital admissions.

Councillors noted that in addition to MUP there were issues of tackling multi-buy promotions and irresponsible promotions that encouraged excessive alcohol consumption

and of inclusion of Public Health as a separate Licensing Objective, not just tied to cumulative impact that could give the opportunity to take the full impact of alcohol related harm into account when making licensing decisions.

The Director, Balance concluded by dispelling the common myths as regards MUP and added that some Government proposals as regards “cutting red tape” in respect of “ancillary sellers”, such as beauty salons or florists, and removing the prohibition on the sale of alcohol at motorway services would only worsen problems associated with the ease of availability of alcohol and was contrary to the powers set out within the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The Chair thanked the Director, Balance and asked Members for their questions for Officers and colleagues from Partner Organisations.

In response to questions from Councillors J Armstrong, P Brookes and Mr AJ Cooke as regards the issues of parental responsibility, tackling alcohol advertising and the current social norm of excessive alcohol consumption, the Director, Balance noted that the alcohol industry spent around £800 Million on advertising, so the relatively tiny amount that could be spent in highlighting the harm caused by alcohol abuse would only be able to impact positively to a certain extent. The Director, Balance added that there was a role for parents in educating their children, alongside other education in schools, however this was only one part of what needed to be a comprehensive approach to tackling alcohol related harm. Members noted that in respect of changing social norms, there was a role for the alcohol industry themselves in how they promoted alcohol, for example links to sporting events and other activities, inferring that alcohol was a necessary component of these activities and occasions.

The Director of Public Health, Anna Lynch added that parents did have an important role in tackling social norms, however, this was one part of a multi-faceted approach incorporating: education in schools; education in the workplace; including alcohol issues within the “Think Family” approach and through the Safer Durham Partnership (SDP). It was added that a high impact video shown to young people by the Police did have a positive effect, with the powerful footage providing a shock value. The Director of Public Health explained that an important component was to help young people understand that other young people were not all having sex, not all drinking or taking drugs and that these misconceptions were not a reason to feel pressured into underage or excessive alcohol consumption.

It was explained that there was not one single intervention method and that those that were employed were carried out in partnership; that prevention was preferable; and that treatment would be commissioned by DCC after April 2013. The Director of Public Health noted that it had been shown that legislation as regards the smoking ban had proven effective and campaigning in respect of smoking had been costly, however greatly less than the cost saving made in respect of public health, demonstrating that legislation and public health campaigns can be effective when undertaken nationally.

The Chair noted statistics from the Police that had shown 97% of Officers had noted a risk of assault from those suffering from alcohol intoxication. Chief Superintendent Ivan Wood, Durham Constabulary noted that sadly it was the case that Police Officers did face those kinds of situations and that, while Officers were aware of the issues and how to deal with them, they were slightly desensitised due to the high number of such incidents they are required to deal with.

The Consumer Protection Manager, Owen Cleugh added that DCC was working with Durham Constabulary in tackling underage sales at local premises and that there were several tools currently at the disposal of the Licensing Section in terms of “Cumulative Impact”; Early Morning Restrictions; and Late Night Levies, however in order to be most effective a regional approach was needed. It was added that in order to use the correct tool, there must be a good evidence base and currently evidence was being gathered in conjunction with Durham Constabulary and other partners.

Councillors J Blakey, P Jopling and Mr T Thompson and Ms M Chappell made comments as regards issues of sale of alcohol at petrol stations; government advertising campaigns; the powers available to DCC in tackling irresponsible promotions by those selling alcohol; powers the Police have in arresting those who are intoxicated; and issues of cutting red tape being at odds with measures being put in place to tackle ASB and Health issues caused by excessive alcohol consumption. Councillor J Lethbridge added that there was a need to ensure that legitimate businesses, such as rural public houses, were not negatively affected by any changes and that a balanced approach was taken.

The Director, Balance noted that Balance supported the principle that alcohol should never be cheaper than the cheapest soft drink available and that some of the Government proposals to cut red tape were contrary to other proposals or existing legislation. The Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary noted that the Police did arrest people who were drunk and disorderly, and that over weekends around 70% of people arrested would have been drinking alcohol. The Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary added that in cases where young people were under-18, their parents would always be contacted. The Director, Balance added that in relation to pubs as community hubs, a survey of over 200 had noted that 80% were in favour of MUP and noted that the biggest impact in tackling alcohol related harm and associated ASB would likely come from any legislation relating to alcohol advertising.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments and the Overview and Scrutiny Manager, Feisal Jassat noted that facilitated groups would discuss specific issues of: MUP and Multi-Buy Promotions; Mandatory Conditions; Cumulative Impact Policy and Health; and Freeing up Responsible Business.

Upon completion of the group discussions, Officers gave feedback on the main points raised, those being: there was support for both a MUP and a ban on multi-buy promotions; support for mandatory conditions for both the on and off-trade; broad agreement for Public Health as a Licensing Objective, with the quality and specificity of the information/evidence being paramount in allowing Members to make reasoned decisions at Committee. In addition, Members did not feel ancillary sellers, and having sellers without an Alcohol Licence, was compatible with Alcohol Strategies attempting to tackle ASB and issues of Public Health.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager thanked Councillors and noted that the response from Overview and Scrutiny Members would be collated and be one of the responses to Government on this issue, alongside a response from SDP and DCC as a Local Authority. It was added that a draft of the response from Overview and Scrutiny Members would be circulated to those present at the Joint Committee via e-mail to give an opportunity to add any further comments prior to submission to Government. Members noted that there would be responses from other Partners in addition, such as the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

Officers reminded Joint Committee that there would be considerably more responses from the Alcohol Industry as they outnumber Local Authorities and Partners by approximately 43 to 1, therefore each individual response would be welcomed and the Director, Balance noted that Members could contact either himself or the Alcohol Harm Reduction Coordinator as regards adding their support via the Balance website, or submitting individual letters in response to the consultation.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the information within the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That a response from Overview and Scrutiny Members to the Government consultation be drafted, based upon the Joint Committee's discussions, and circulated to Members for any final comments as soon as possible.
- (iii) That a final response, incorporating any further comments from Members, be submitted to Government prior to their deadline of 6 February 2013.