

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5 January 2016

Overview and Scrutiny Review Alcohol and the demand on Emergency Services – Draft Scoping Document



Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. To present for consideration by Members a draft scoping document for the Committee's review on alcohol and the demand on Emergency Services.

Background

2. The Committee considered the content of the Draft Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2015-2020 at its meeting in June 2015. At this meeting Members also requested to undertake review activity linked to the strategy within its current work programme.
3. An action within the strategy is to 'develop an increased understanding of the nature and scale of the problem of drunkenness and its impact upon the safety of individuals and communities and the associated demands placed upon partner services.' This area has also been looked at by the Institute of Alcohol Studies who in October 2015 published its report 'Alcohol's impact on emergency services'. The report highlighted the following proportion of time was spent dealing with alcohol related incidents, Police 53%, Ambulance 37%, Emergency Department Consultants 25% and Fire Service 21%. In addition, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Harm is undertaking an Inquiry into the 'Impact of alcohol on the Emergency Services' to which a response has been provided from agencies within County Durham.
4. A draft scoping document is attached in Appendix 2. The document identifies the purpose of the review is to gain an understanding of the impact of alcohol related incidents on levels of demand for emergency services within County Durham.
5. The review will also seek to gather a wide range of evidence through research, undertake field study activity and holding review group meetings with key officers from relevant services between January and March 2016.

Recommendation

6. Members of the Committee are asked to note information within this report and agree the scoping document attached in Appendix 2.

Background Papers

None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing – None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – Information contained in this report and presentation relates to the Altogether Safer element of the Council Plan and the Safe Durham Partnership Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2015 -2020

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – None

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Draft Scoping Document Review Activity – Alcohol and the demand on Emergency Services

Background

The Committee considered the content of the Draft Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2015-2020 at its meeting in June 2015. At this meeting Members also requested to undertake review activity linked to the strategy within its current work programme.

The strategy created by the Safe Durham Partnership Alcohol Harm Reduction Group was formally agreed by the Safe Durham Partnership in September 2015 and is aligned to the County Durham Partnership themes of Altogether Safer, Healthier, Better for Children and Young People, Wealthier and Greener. Whilst there are cross cutting objectives the Altogether Safer element is aligned to the Committee's responsibilities and focuses a number of areas including anti-social behaviour, drunkenness, violent crime, domestic abuse, offending and re-offending and road safety.

Drunkenness can have an impact on all of these areas and the strategy reports information from police community surveys that *'indicate that 37% of people in County Durham see drinking and causing a nuisance as a problem'*. In addition, findings from a police perception survey undertaken by the North East Alcohol Office, Balance indicate that *'excessive drinking continues to cause harm and demand for services'*.

An action within the strategy is to 'develop an increased understanding of the nature and scale of the problem of drunkenness and its impact upon the safety of individuals and communities and the associated demands placed upon partner services.' This work will also be supported by receiving evidence from findings of a cumulative impact assessment on the number of licensed alcohol premises within the County that has been recently undertaken.

This area has also been looked at by the Institute of Alcohol Studies who in October 2015 published its report 'Alcohol's impact on emergency services'. The report highlighted the following proportion of time was spent dealing with alcohol related incidents, Police 53%, Ambulance 37%, Emergency Department Consultants 25% and Fire Service 21%. In addition, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Harm is undertaking an Inquiry into the 'Impact of alcohol on the Emergency Services' to which a response has been provided from agencies within County Durham.

Within this context, at a time of challenging resource provision alcohol related incidents have a significant impact on the emergency services. The Committee has a role to scrutinise work of the Safe Durham Partnership and the focus of this work will look at the impact of alcohol on emergency services within County Durham and aim to contribute evidence to support the Alcohol Harm Reduction

Strategy in understanding the demand on services and aim to identify outcomes that could contribute to reducing this demand. The review will seek to gather evidence through research, meetings with service professionals and partners from the Alcohol Harm Reduction Group and undertake appropriate field study activity to gain an insight into the impact of drunkenness on the emergency services. Findings from this review will be presented to the Council's Cabinet and the Safe Durham Partnership Alcohol Harm Reduction Group.

Purpose of the Review

To gain an understanding of the impact of alcohol related incidents on levels of demand for emergency services.

Objectives

- To receive an overview of the Altogether Safer Element of the Safe Durham Partnership's Alcohol Strategy and findings from the cumulative impact assessment to look at the scale of the demand on emergency services.
- To undertake desktop research through findings from publications and inquiries into the impact of alcohol related incidents on emergency services.
- To gather evidence from Emergency Services within County Durham on the demand on services through the proportion of incidents that are alcohol related, the nature of these incidents, challenges that are faced and action taken to reduce demand.
- To undertake appropriate field study activity to gain an understanding of the impact of alcohol on emergency services..
- To consider evidence from the North East Alcohol Office Balance, the Council's Public Health Team, the Alcohol Harm Reduction Unit which is co-located with the Council's licensing and consumer protection team on licensing powers, preventing alcohol related incidents and campaign awareness.

Membership

The Working Group will include Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, elements of the review are linked to Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it is therefore suggested that the working group's membership includes the Chair and Vice Chair of Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Reporting Arrangements

The Overview and Scrutiny review group will report to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and the Safe Durham Partnership Alcohol Harm Reduction Group on its findings and recommendations.

Timescale

Review Group meetings and visits are to take place between January and March 2016 with a report scheduled to be presented to the Committee, Cabinet and Safe Durham Partnership Alcohol Harm Reduction Group thereafter.

Proposed Meeting dates are as follows

21st January 2016 - 9.30am, Committee Room 2, County Hall

9th February 2016 - 9.30am, Council Chamber, County Hall

18th February 2016 - 9.30am, Committee Room 2, County Hall

15th March 2016 - 9.30am, Committee Rm 1B, County Hall