

Medway Council
Meeting of Licensing and Safety Committee
Wednesday, 17 September 2014
6.00pm to 6.55pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

- Present:** Councillors: Baker, Adrian Gulvin, Rodberg, Shaw, Carr (Vice-Chairman) and Iles
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Pat Gulvin (Substitute for Griffin)
Smith (Substitute for Kearney)
Hicks (Substitute for Mrs Diane Chambers)
- In Attendance:** DC Gill Angus, Kent Police
Alison Poulson, Licensing and Local Land Charges Manager
Lauren Wallis, Democratic Services Officer

337 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 July 2014 was agreed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

338 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Diane Chambers, Griffin, Harriott and Kearney.

339 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

340 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

341 Annual Report of Police Enforcement

Discussion:

The Chairman welcomed Detective Constable Gill Angus to the meeting.

Detective Constable (DC) Angus advised that this was the second time she had presented the annual report to the Committee and stated that the Police Licensing Team now contained more officers and covered areas other than Medway including Dartford, Gravesham and Swale. The work was split between compliance and enforcement and it was considered that compliance reduced the number of complaints regarding premises licenses whereas enforcement and reviews were used as a last resort. She reported that a recent review had resulted in a public house in Chatham being closed down.

DC Angus went on to make the following points:

- The number of temporary event notices issued between April 2013 and March 2014 had seen a significant reduction on the previous year. The reason for the reduction was the increase in use of a new and varied licensing application so there was no longer the need for licensed premises to use a temporary event notice for special events.
- The Medway area had the highest proportion of crimes generated from pubs and clubs (not premises serving late night refreshments) and this was mainly due to premises overcrowding. The Kent Fire and Rescue Service calculated the capacity of licensed premises. However, it was noted that some crimes attributed to a premises happened outside the premises. This tended to happen when a caller to the emergency services had identified the address outside of which the incident had occurred. The Committee was advised that Rochester had the second busiest night-time economy in Kent after Canterbury.
- With regard to page 21 of the report, Councillors were informed that the door supervisors of licensed premises routinely shared information with the police. DC Angus reported that the 18-24 year age range for victims and offenders was approximately the same across all four areas. However more surprising was the increase of victims and offenders in the 30 years plus age range. It was noted that some licensed premises actively tried to attract an older age range of customers.
- DC Angus reported particular problems in Gillingham and people who had lived in the area all their lives who congregated in local licensed premises. This tended to prompt the reliving of schoolyard insults, for example 'you stole my girlfriend when we were at school' which in turn caused problems. In addition, the eastern European population had a culture of heavy drinking. To address this issue, licensed premises had employed door supervisors who spoke the appropriate language who banned known heavy drinkers until they became re-educated.

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- DC Angus advised that the poisoning listed on page 23 of the report referred to drink spiking and no cases had been correctly identified. Those that had been reported had been found to be over indulgence with regard to alcohol and not drink spiking. In addition, the Committee was advised that most offences were caused by multiple offenders for example, one person committing 6 offences in one night. However no racial attacks had been reported which was very good news. The numbers of offences had decreased and door supervisors and dispersal policies were working very well in achieving this objective. The Police were considering relocating the taxi ranks in Rochester as the current sites tended to generate crime and disorder.
- DC Angus gave credit to the licensed premises for all their partnership working. She felt that the poor night-time reputation of Rochester was very unfair and people needed to take a more balanced view as the situation had improved tremendously in recent years. A number of Councillors agreed with this view and felt that the night-time economy in Rochester should be promoted perhaps through Medway Matters.
- Page 25 of the report noted the 75% of violence against the person offences are Actual Bodily Harm and Common Assault. This percentage included domestic violence the incidence of which tended to spike during events such as the football world cup. The Police were working with Public Health and Accident & Emergency departments in hospitals in an effort to identify which licensed premises the victims had last visited. The problem with this information is that victims could often not remember very much.
- In relation to Public Health, the Committee was advised of the initiatives that could be put in place to help street drinkers to overcome their multiple problems such as alcoholism, social isolation, housing, health etc. It had been suggested that a “wet house” or “wet area” be identified which would be a safe place for street drinkers to congregate and outreach workers could be present to assist them.
- DC Angus reported that the Police Licensing Team was working to reduce the content percentage of alcohol being sold by certain premises to 5.5% in an effort to deter street drinkers from drinking too much. Some premises behaved responsibly and limited the amount they sold to known street drinkers on a daily basis. However, it was the premises that were selling unlimited amounts to street drinkers that were being targeted by the Police to reduce the alcohol percentage of the drinks they were allowed to sell.
- DC Angus reported that she was a member of all the partnership working groups across the board for reasons of continuity. The Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs) collected evidence to assist with the cancellation of non-compliant events. The HMRC was being assisted by the Police in the investigation of non-duty and counterfeit alcohol.

The Committee asked the following questions which were answered by DC Angus.

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- Page 23 of the report was referred to in that it did not contain the numbers of drugs offences. DC Angus responded that although there were drug offences, these statistics were about violence against a person.
- The Committee noted the successful multi-agency operation in Chatham in relation to illegal tobacco.
- A Member commented that he felt that there was scope for a voluntary agreement with respect to a premises in Rochester with regard to the space outside. DC Angus advised that the outside area was licensed, belonged to Medway Council and was currently controlled by the premises. If the area was not controlled by the premises it may in the future be used by street drinkers. The Committee noted that only the sale of alcohol was licensable not the consumption. DC Angus reported that she would be meeting with the owner of the premises to discuss the matter further.
- Further to a question about another premises in Rochester, it was noted that an application from the original Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS) had been refused. The new DPS had since increased the number of door supervisors and reduced the premises opening hours.
- A member of the Committee commented that it would be useful to have a police view of any applications being considered by the Council's Licensing Hearing Panels and more specifically in relation to areas where there was a proliferation of premises undertaking off-sales of alcohol.
- Following a question in relation to the 30 year plus age bracket, DC Angus agreed to provide the Committee with a breakdown in numbers perhaps 30 to 49 years and 50 years plus.

DC Angus was thanked by the Committee for attending the meeting and for answering questions.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Chairman

Date:

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