

WRS Board: 23rd June 2022

Information Report on the work of the Night-Time Economy Team

Recommendation | That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the information provided in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities

Background | Through the stages of the Prime Ministers Roadmap to recovery during the Covid 19 pandemic, the Night-Time Economy (NTE) has been under a great deal of scrutiny. Concerns from Public Health bodies around people's tendency to adhere less to social distancing and other behaviours that could limit the spread of disease following the consumption of alcohol meant that frequent checks were undertaken at pubs and similar premises to ensure that the various controls remained in place. Much of this work was done by dedicated officers working alongside colleagues from West Mercia Police.

Since the lifting of all Covid 19 restrictions, with funding for work still committed, the officers originally tasked with this work have turned their hands to dealing with a range of other issues that can arise in the NTE. Whilst the approach taken can deal reactively with complaints, the main activity undertaken was proactive visits to businesses where non-compliance was suspected due to intelligence from various sources. Tasking decisions on where to deploy were informed by robust intelligence drawn from a wide variety of available sources, both internal and external, tested by our Intelligence officer and logged in our Intelligence system. This has enabled officers to focus resources and visits to the areas where the intelligence picture was indicating there may be issues. The hospitality sector is an important part of Worcestershire's economy, and this work has allowed the team to target non-compliance but also to support local businesses to achieve this in a way that limits cost, aiding in the post pandemic economic recovery.

Report | The NTE Teams visible presence alone, out of office hours, has been delivering a message that the district councils take their responsibilities seriously in dealing with issues that arise in the sector. The focus of the NTE team has been ensuring that licensing objectives are upheld by premises, however, the flexibility shown by the officers we have recruited has allowed us to direct them to a much broader supporting role as part of WRS,

with the team also currently undertaking the following activities:

- **Monitoring of taxi licensing activities**

Including checking taxi ranks and providing on the spot advice. By having a presence, active monitoring of requirements like wearing of ID badges and correct display of plate, visual checks of tyres and other issues that might suggest unroadworthiness, to ensure safety for residents and visitors alike.

- **Licensing Enforcement Activities including Suspended Licences**

When licences have been suspended some businesses continue to trade so officers have been out ensuring that this is not occurring but where it does that the WRS licensing enforcement policy is deployed appropriately. Some of these visits have taken place jointly with trading standards colleagues to undertake test purchasing exercises.

- **Noise checks**

Officers have been trained and are capable of delivering basic noise checks to ensure pubs and other commercial premises are upholding the licensing objectives. They can undertake observations of domestic noise complaints to see if deploying a qualified EHO to determine a statutory nuisance may be necessary, with this being done out of hours, at the sensitive times when it is sometimes most needed. This can negate the need for other officers to visit, for example where the noise is not likely to meet the threshold for statutory nuisance, even though it may be an annoyance to some.

- **Simple food hygiene checks**

These are also undertaken at all relevant premises visited. These are treated as pre-inspection checks, with serious issues being highlighted to the Community Environmental Health (CEH) team for them to send someone out to address major problems quickly. It also saves the CEH team and the business time by ensuring that all the required paperwork is in place before the formal inspection visit occurs. Prior to their visit, the NTE team also check the correct food rating stars awarded to the business, comparing this with what is displayed at the time of their visit. This ensures that the public are not misled when making choices at the point of entry to a business.

Proactive visits to premises and investigating complaints has been the bread-and-butter work of the team and, by driving these activities via the intelligence picture, it has allowed WRS to focus its stretched resources on those key issues. To give members an idea of the volume of work undertaken, the table in appendix 1 lists the numbers of visits recently undertake in various parts of the county. Some premises will have been visited on several occasions to check compliance issues.

The NTE team's interventions have been important in raising awareness of legal

requirements with businesses and supported the consistency of behaviours within our NTE remit. They have also taken on everything from animal boarding establishment checks to addressing problematic ice cream vendors in their day-to-day duties away from the NTE.

The information gathered by the team has been fed back internally, with intelligence reports generated, and disseminated to partners where relevant. This approach has helped us to conclude that we need a cross cutting priority to focus resource on this important economic area and highlighted the need for a cross team problem-solving approach that will sometimes lead to multi-agency action being required. The work of the team has also improved communications with the Worcester Bid, the various Pubwatch arrangements across the districts and a range of colleagues involved in economic development and town centre management. It has also supported wider engagement with bodies on the ground working in the NTE such as street pastors and of course with our West Mercia colleagues, ensuring joint solutions are actioned with shared resources.

Sadly, the funding for this team comes to an end on 30th June, so the dedicated resource will no longer be available. The cross service NTE priority will however remain, and we will work to address the issues but of course without the dedicated resource that we have had available, which will mean responses will need to be planned around other activities.

Looking Forward

WRS's strategic assessment for 2022 onwards, sets out a cross team collaborative approach to tackling issues that arise in the NTE, and the adopting and strengthening of proactive intelligence-led working practices as demonstrated by our original Covid 19 Night-Time Economy team. There are many other local authority teams and partners outside of councils involved in supporting or policing the NTE and partner organisations can utilise the information gathered by WRS officers to assist in achieving their objectives. It is hoped that a more joined-up approach to issues faced will ensure that organisations can tackle issues in a more holistic manner, with the intelligence gathered providing clear and concise information to enable efficient informed decision-making.

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Appendix 1: Visit Table

Total visits to premises in Different parts of Worcestershire's NTE

AREA	Visits January – April 2022	Areas highlighted through visits
Worcester	106	Licensing, Policing and Noise
Bromsgrove	47	ASB, Licensing, Taxi complaints
Kidderminster	30	Licensing, Policing, Food
Bewdley	2	Councillor raised concerns regarding enforcement, Noise
Droitwich	6	Licensing, Noise, Policing
Pershore and Villages	14	Licensing, Food
Evesham	28	Food, Licensing, ASB
Malvern	22	Licensing, Policing, Noise
Redditch	25	Licensing, Food, Taxi complaints
TOTAL Number of Visits	280	