

## **STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE – SPECIAL MEETING**

Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2006 at 7.00 pm  
at Stourbridge Town Hall, The Crown Centre, Stourbridge

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillor Adams (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Cowell (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors Attwood, Banks, Mrs Collins, Donegan, Jones, Kettle, Knowles,  
Lowe, Mrs Martin and A Turner.

### **OFFICERS:-**

Director of Law and Property (as Area Liaison Officer), Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services), Licensing Officer (Directorate of Law and Property), Mr Vangeersdaele (Directorate of the Urban Environment) and Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law and Property)

### **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:-**

Superintendent S Johnson, DCI Freail (West Midlands Police) and 14 members of the public

#### 24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillor Rogers, Ms Shepherd and Mr Humphreys (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement).

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#### 25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No member made a Declaration of Interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of any matters to be considered at this meeting.

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#### 26 **PROPOSALS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF A SPECIAL LIQUOR LICENCING POLICY REGARDING THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF LICENSED PREMISES IN STOURBRIDGE**

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted seeking consideration of proposals for the introduction of a Special Liquor Licensing Policy regarding the cumulative impact of licensed premises in Stourbridge Town Centre.

Approval in principle had been given to the introduction of such a policy at the meeting of the Licensing and Safety Committee held on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2006, arising from which it had also been resolved that the introduction of the policy be consulted upon. This meeting had been convened for the purpose of consultation with residents of Stourbridge.

A presentation by the Police on an overview of the current situation in Stourbridge, from their perspective, had been given to the Licensing and Safety Committee and the same presentation was now made to this Committee by Detective Chief Inspector Freail. In so doing, he gave an analysis of the problems in Stourbridge; the work done so far and the initiatives taken by the Police and other agencies including the Council aimed at alleviating drink-related problems in Stourbridge; statistics relating to licensed premises and crime statistics not only in Stourbridge Town Centre, but as compared with Merry Hill and Halesowen. The latter showed a clear increase in violent crime during the period from April 2001 to March 2006. Also provided was a graph of a month long review of alcohol related offences in Halesowen and Stourbridge indicating that there had been 40 alcohol related offences in Stourbridge Town Centre and only 10 in Halesowen during that period.

The Assistant Director of Law and Property (Legal and Democratic Services) then gave a presentation on the legislative background to the introduction of a possible Cumulative Impact Policy arising from the introduction of the Liquor Licensing Act, 2003. The process by which such a policy could be introduced were also outlined, including the requirement to consult. After consultation, a draft policy taking into account responses received would be referred to the Licensing and Safety Committee for consideration prior to the policy being referred to the full Council for determination. It was currently proposed that the machinery would be put in place for the referral of the policy to Council, at its meeting to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2006.

A plan showing the area and the licensed premises that would be covered under the proposed policy was circulated. Both Detective Chief Inspector Freail and the Assistant Director of Law and Property, in their respective presentations, explained the reasons why the area and premises therein had been selected for inclusion as relating to the significant numbers of young people drawn to the premises, particularly on Friday and Saturday evenings; the layout of the Town Centre and the narrowness of the High Street, which did not lend itself easily to rapid dispersal of customers leaving licensed premises; the increases in crime and disorder late at night; and issues regarding parking, littering and fouling.

A question and answer session followed in which some members of the public asked for the Rock Café in Mill Race Lane to be included within the scope of the policy. One member of the public advocated the whole of the area of Stourbridge Area Committee be so included. Detective Chief Inspector Freail and the Assistant Director of Law and Property both explained the machinery available within the Licensing Act to deal with licensed premises outside the area of the proposed policy, should action be necessary.

In response to questions, clarification was given by the Area Liaison Officer and the Assistant Director on the legal requirements regarding publication of statutory notices and the machinery of the Council regarding the approval of the policy. Clarification was also given on the limitations of the Council's powers in relation to the sale and use of premises, in the light of rumours circulating about the disposal of the former Yorkshire Bank premises. A distinction was also made by the Council officers on the respective powers

of the Council with regard to licensing and planning law.

The introduction of the proposals was then discussed by the members of the Committee, who were supportive by a substantial majority. Some members commented in adverse terms about the impact on Stourbridge Town Centre since the relaxed licensing laws came into effect. In generally supporting the proposals, one member remembered Stourbridge as being lifeless at night prior to the relaxation of the licensing laws and cautioned against too restrictive a line being taken.

During the member discussion, the Assistant Director of Law and Property clarified the length of the process involved in implementing the proposed policy, once a decision to implement had been approved. He also advised on the situation regarding any proposals for the introduction of any further licensed premises in the area of the proposed policy in the period before the policy could be implemented.

RESOLVED

That the proposal for the introduction of a Special Liquor Licensing Policy regarding the Cumulative Impact of Licensed Premises in Stourbridge Town Centre in the area described in the report now submitted be supported.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the dates of future meetings, as set out in the agenda, be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.35 p.m.

CHAIRMAN