

**ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY PANEL: NIGHT TIME
ECONOMY INQUIRY**
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3RD FEBRUARY 2010

Present:

Councillors Thomas (Chair), Drake, Galton, Jones, Odgers, Payne and Willacy.

Also in attendance Councillors Bogle and Parnell, Mr A Keble, Federation of Southampton Tenants and Residents Association (FOSTARA), Mr R Pitt, Street Pastors Coordinator, Mr T Thorne, Solent University, Ms R Bell, Southampton University, Mr S Ward, Vice President Student Support Solent University Student Union, Mr R Hancock, Public Relations Mayflower Theatre. Mr D Shear, Assistant Manager The Orange Rooms, Mr S Grant, General Manager De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel and Ms S Lynskey, CX Business Southampton.

14. MINUTES

RESOLVED that minutes of the meetings held on 13th January, 2010 be signed as a correct record.

15. THE IMPACT OF THE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY – STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

The Panel considered the report of the Head of Policy and Improvement on feedback from the stakeholders on the Night Time Economy in addition to the written evidence requested from various other stakeholders. (Copy of report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

The Panel received evidence and comments from Councillor Bogle, Bargate Ward:-

- the majority of concerns were expressed in the Polygon (the closest residential area to the to the City Centre) regarding the behaviour of students and others causing damage and disturbance on their way home although it was accepted that it was only the minority of people who caused a disturbance;
- the work that had been carried out with traders and residents in the area in an attempt to alleviate the problems caused by the Night Time Economy;
- the numerous instances of best practice that had been put in place including the taxi marshal scheme and the 'Best Bar Bar None', the input from health campaigners and workers on the Night Time Economy;
- the problems that are associated with the Night Time Economy:-
 - the proliferation of vertical drinking establishments;
 - the drinking culture in the UK;
 - the promotion of heritage and culture with a view to the Night Time Economy offer being made more attractive to a more diverse clientele.

The Panel received evidence and comments from Councillor Parnell, Freemantle Ward. He provided details of a letter from a Bevois Valley resident received in his role as Chair of the City Council's Licensing Committee which contained the following complaints and comments:-

- the City had reached saturation point regarding the number of premises

- licensed to sell alcohol;
- the inordinate amount of noise and disturbance caused on a regular basis by patrons of licensed premises passing by residential property in areas on the fringe of the City Centre in the early hours of the morning;
- the vandalism perpetrated by patrons of licensed premises located in the City Centre when on their way home passing through residential areas while 'in drink';
- the pressure that the licensed premises sector of the Night Time Economy places on City Council and emergency services resources; and
- the possibility of the introduction of measures to afford some protection to residents living in the inner city and residential areas on the fringe of the inner city.

In discussion the following points/questions were raised in relation to the contributions from Councillors Bogle and Parnell:-

- the provisions contained within the Licensing Act 2003 to facilitate the review of premises licences;
- the features of the Night Time Economy that were liked or complained about by residents and the correlation as to their location ;
- the issue of supermarkets supplying cheap alcohol and the problems caused by preloading.

The Panel received and raised questions relating to evidence and comments provided by Mr A Kebble, Federation of Southampton Tenants and Residents Association:-

- the majority of complaints resulting from the activities associated with the Night Time Economy were from the Polygon, Highfield, Bevois, Bassett and Swaythling areas of the city, with many repeat complainants. Not all complaints of ASB can be attributed to the NTE.
- the pubs in some areas close early often 'driving' people to the City Centre;
- the considerable variance in standards of management of licensed premises in the City.

In discussion the following points/questions were raised:-

- the areas of the City where complaints associated with the activities arise the most frequently;
- the nature of complaints in other areas and the perception of 'under policing' as the police resources were concentrated in the City Centre;
- the nature and cause of the majority of complaints from residents identified as noise and vandalism; and
- the possibility of attracting residents to the Night Time Economy by having student free venues.

The Panel received and raised questions relating to evidence and comments provided by Mr R Pitt, Coordinator of the Street Pastors:-

- the details of the organisation of the Street Pastors:-
 - voluntary nature of the organisation;
 - representatives of churches;
 - joint working with Police, Council and NHS;
 - 200 across the country;
 - operates Friday and Saturday 1000pm to 0400am

- Pastors operating in Southampton were 20 to 79 years of age working one day a month;
- Pastors equally split between males and females;
- operating since May last year;
- the service provided the Street Pastors as follows:-
 - provision of a reassuring caring uniformed presence;
 - protection of people when they have drunk to much;
 - removal of glass from the City Centre;
 - provision of flip flops for women;
 - provision of information under a clear protocol; and
 - provision of basic first aid;
- the major problems encountered were people drinking to much (both male and female) and putting themselves at risk;
- the other main problems were urinating in the streets and violence;
- the people involved were by no means all students;
- the number of bottles bought from outside and brought in to the City Centre;
- the 'fun' nature of providing the service to the public;
- the city centre being much safer at night than many people perceive;
- the importance of Licensing Link;
- the instigation of zero tolerance to violence; and
- the 'No drinking in public' policy should be reinforced.

In discussion the following points/questions were raised:-

- the support from the Police and 'well defined' operational procedure and guidelines that the Street Pastors received;
- the reasons why the service was a 'roaming service' and not operating in a fixed safe area (some clients were incapable of walking therefore the service needed to be mobile);
- the usefulness of the 'Ice Bus' and quiet places for people to retreat to; and
- the role of the Street Pastors of being there to 'help' and not to 'preach'.

The Panel received and raised questions relating to evidence and comments provided by Mr T Thorne, Director of Marketing and Communication – Solent University:-

- the University's duty of care to students and the residential areas they impact on;
- the University's support for the Police and the donation made to the Street Pastors;
- the university's disciplinary code and the monitoring of offences students commit (usually noise and disturbance as opposed to violence);
- the possibility of students being removed from their course under the code should they not behave appropriately and be in serious breach of the code;
- the contribution they make to the local economy;
- the frequency that students are the victims of crime;
- the University's support for initiatives such as Operation Batcombe;
- the withdrawal of the Solent University bar from the 'carnage' event; and
- the University's support for the development of the culture quarter in the

- City Centre; and
- the wish for more signage on the DPPO.

The Panel received and raised questions relating to evidence and comments provided by Ms R Bell, Assistant Director University Residences, Southampton University:-

- the University's support for the development of the culture quarter in the City Centre and students enthusiasm to contribute to the city;
- the University's involvement in the 'Tackling Alcohol Partnership and the efforts made to combat binge drinking;
- the University's non involvement with the 'Carnage' event;
- the bars on University premises supplying the cheapest non alcoholic drinks in town; and
- the talks organised for students moving out of halls into private rented accommodation.

The Panel received and raised questions relating to evidence and comments provided by Mr S Ward, Vice President Student Support, Solent University Student Union:-

- the Union's primary focus of ensuring that students have a safe and fulfilling experience while as Solent University;
- the work the Union has been engaged in with a number of external groups such as Drink Aware, Primary Care Trust, the Police and the City Council;
- the recent decision by the Union to cease the partnership arrangements with Southampton's local bars and clubs owing to some of the robust promotion of 'drink deals' by some establishments;
- the reduction in influence and impact the Union has on the safety of students in light of the above decision;
- the Bedford Place area as a 'hotspot' for potential incidents owing to the fierce competition and intensive promotions between the numerous bars;
- the need for a vibrant, energetic and attractive Night Time Economy in Southampton and necessity for more stringent regulations;
- the issues surrounding the Night Time Economy were common to many towns and Cities;
- the advice centre run by the Union for students and the advice given on personal safety and the joint working with 'Drink Aware';
- the Union's advice to students not to attend the 'carnage' event; and
- the shuttle buses run between the various campuses.

In discussion the following points/questions were raised on the contributions made by Mr Thorne, Ms Bell and Mr Ward:-

- the possibility of the 'student day' being amended via the student timetable to coincide with those of the majority of those living in the City against the capacity of university facilities and a student's need to work;
- the possibility of Solent University funding a PCO in the Polygon area to assist with noise and general nuisance;
- the Marshal Scheme that operates on the campus of Southampton University;
- the successes of operation Batcombe and the subsequent attempts to build bridges with the local community;

- the work of the Tackling Alcohol Partnership in 'reaching' students;
- the exploitation of students by some bars and businesses resulting in removal of the affiliation between Solent University and some bars; and
- the diverse range of students at both Universities would welcome a larger and wider range of activities and facilities on offer in the Night Time Economy.

The Panel received and raised questions relating to evidence and comments provided by Mr R Hancox, Press and Public Relations Officer, The Mayflower Theatre:-

- the Mayflower was the third largest theatre in the UK with a capacity of 2,340 and during 2009 attracted 500,000 customers with a catchment area from Weymouth to Worthing and as far north as Basingstoke;
- the impact of the introduction of evening/night time car parking charges has hit people from outside the area who have struggled to park. It has resulted in an increase in late admissions of 10%;
- the large number of patrons that attend a show and wish to go on and see/do other things in the City but there are limited options for older people and poor information and signage e.g. Oxford Street to the Mayflower;
- the contribution the Mayflower makes in respect of the AA signs for the larger productions and shows; and
- the lack of assistance from the City Council in publicising the theatre unlike some other towns where the local authority assist on a regular basis.

The Panel received and raised questions relating to evidence and comments provided by Mr D Shear, Assistant General Manager, The Orange Rooms:-

- the Orange Rooms clientele consisted of numerous socio economic groups including students;
- the numerous schemes that bars can be involved in to promote attendance and sales;
- the Orange Room policy of operating a minimum price on Tuesday nights (student night);
- the possibility that Licensing Link should be compulsory;
- the door staff across venues working well together; and
- the national issue of pricing of alcohol and 'preloading'.

The Panel received and raised questions relating to evidence and comments provided by Mr S Grant, General Manager of the DE Vere Grand Harbour Hotel:-

- the hotel had staged a student ball recently and had encountered no behaviour problems;
- the hotel had served approximately 6000 covers during the Christmas period and experienced no behavioural problems;
- the hotel took the view that it had a duty to assist in the 'growing' of the local economy.

The Panel received and raised questions relating to evidence and comments provided by Ms Lynskey, Chief Executive of Business Southampton:-

- the business leaders in the City were committed to improving the City as a place to live and work;
- the Street Pastors were most welcomed and their work applauded by Business Southampton;
- the most 'troublesome' periods were on Saturday and Tuesday nights between 1 00am and 3 00am;
- the students were usually the victims of crime rather than the perpetrators of crime and disorder;
- the Night Time Economy should be encouraged to 'grow' with a different 'mix' of attractions;
- the need to establish a permanent all year round site for the boat show;
- the Masterplan will give a framework for the design of the city and needs to design crime out of the City Centre where ever possible; and
- the instigation of evening car parking charges has hit traders and could dissuade people from taking jobs in the Night Time Economy.
- the poor signage in the City Centre

In discussion the following points/questions were raised on the contributions made by Mr Hancox, Mr Grant and Ms Lynskey:-

- the range of options and activities the Night Time Economy has to offer for people visiting the City for a few days;
- the need for a central hub for information and need for signage in the City centre and the attractions for people to stay in the city after 10:00pm;
- the part the culture quarter would play in attracting people to the City;
- the need for electronic signs to assist people getting around the central area of the City;
- the success of the 'City Clipper' bus service;
- the City brand project needs to be rolled out;
- Need to ensure websites are linked so people can find out what is happening;
- the strengthening of links between business and the public sector; and
- the proposed advertising campaign by Business Southampton to promote the City's assets.

RESOLVED that the evidence submitted to the Panel by Mr A Keble, Federation of Southampton Tenants and Residents Association (FOSTARA), Mr R Pitt, Street Pastors Coordinator, Mr Thorne, Solent University, Ms R Bell, Southampton University, Mr S Ward, Vice President Student Support Solent University Student Union, Mr Hancock, Public Relations Mayflower Theatre. Mr D Shear, Assistant Manager The Orange Rooms, Mr S Grant, General Manager De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel and Ms S Lynskey, Chief Executive Business Southampton be noted and the information provided be entered in to the Inquiry's file of evidence.