

Redditch Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel: Chair's report of Panel meeting held on Thursday 20th January 2011.

The Panel welcomed its new member Cllr Roger Hill to the meeting. Also present were Cllr Brenda Quinney as a substitute for Cllr Anita Clayton, and Cllr Simon Chalk.

The Panel was also joined by Mr Michael Collins as an independent member; and Angie Heighway, Head of the Community Safety Partnership. The local press were also in attendance.

Item 4: Alcohol Related Admissions to Hospital

The Panel welcomed Kate Ray, Worcestershire Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), to deliver a presentation on alcohol related hospital admissions in Redditch and how these compared to both the rest of the County and Country. The presentation was followed by a question and answer session.

The presentation was both enlightening and informative, some of the points which the Panel learnt were:- nationally the UK has some of the highest drinking levels in Europe resulting in the UK consumption doubling in the last 50 years it is estimated that 70% of the UK adult population drinking alcohol.

With that national context in mind, the presentation addressed the local scene. Members heard that Redditch has the worst record for alcohol related hospital admissions for under-18 year olds in the West Midlands and is ranked twentieth worst in the UK. The Panel was offered reasons for this, notably that the local hospital (the Alexandra) has a policy of admitting all intoxicated under-16 year olds onto a ward overnight and then releases the clients back to parents or carers the following morning.

Some of DAATs local priorities in tackling alcohol related crime and disorder included: providing support for perpetrators and victims in domestic abuse cases; tackling problems related to the night time economy; and assisting in the employment of detached youth workers who work with young people who are misusing alcohol.

Some of DAATs local success stories shared with the panel included: - the recruitment of 2 alcohol liaison nurses to work at the within the A & E units at Worcester and Redditch; the third straight successful year of the Alcohol Arrest Referral Programme which works closely with the police at the point of arrest with the aim of getting offenders referred to agencies to help the individuals with alcohol issues.

Some local statistics for Redditch:-

- Estimated 12,384 over 16 year olds are consuming alcohol at "risk" levels.
- Estimated 3,486 under 16 year olds are living with "problematic" drinkers.
- There were 924 alcohol related offences in 2009/2010.

- The number of alcohol related hospital admissions for 2009/2010 was 1642 which is a 105% increase from 2002/03.

During the question and answer session it was clear from the evidence that alcohol consumption is an issue in Redditch amongst most age groups. It was the opinion of the presenter that the message of safe responsible drinking had not been sufficiently communicated to the public, and suggested that a national campaign was required along a similar line to the effective national campaign concerning the health dangers connected with smoking.

During the debate it was commented that the new licensing laws had not produced the expected outcomes that were hoped for, that of reduced alcohol consumption and sensible drinking and the café culture. It was felt that a return to the previous system of limited licensing hours and powers returned to magistrate's courts may improve matters.

The Panel thanked Kate Ray for both her presentation and for answering its subsequent questions. It was proposed that the Panel invite a representative from DAAT for a follow up presentation in approximately 12 months time. Members felt that the session was very helpful on many levels, including: learning of the current situation both nationally and locally; the developments and programs of DAAT; their campaigns and strategies deployed and the general airing the subject matter in wider public arena.

Item 5: Notes from the Community Safety Partnership meeting on 8th September 2010

The Panel then considered and discussed the notes of the Community Safety Partnership meeting of 8th September 2010 as part of its role in monitoring the work of the Partnership.

Item 6: Questions to the Chair of Community Safety Partnership

Members also drew up a series of written questions that would be submitted to the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership prior to her attendance at the next meeting on Thursday 14th April 2011 at 6.30 pm.

Councillor W. Hartnett.
21st January 2011