

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5th July 2011

Alcohol Related Admissions Rates – Guidance Report

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Local Environment and Health, Councillor Brandon Clayton
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No.
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Community Services, Angie Heighway
Wards Affected	All Wards
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report is intended to provide brief guidance in relation to scrutiny of alcohol admission rates to hospital amongst young people. The guidance should enable Members to determine an appropriate further course of action for consideration of this subject.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to identify what further action, if any, is considered appropriate for consideration of the subject of alcohol related admission rates to hospital among young people and

to RESOLVE that:

the report be noted.

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 The Police and Justice Act 2006 (sections 19 and 20) introduced a requirement for every local authority in England and Wales to have a scrutiny committee designated with responsibility for scrutinising the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). In Redditch this scrutiny function is allocated to the Council's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, which is a permanent sub-committee of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2 In July 2010 the panel identified the issue of alcohol related admissions to hospital amongst young people as an important issue for the Redditch CDRP, the Redditch Community Safety Partnership, to address. A presentation on the subject, *Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel: Alcohol Related Hospital Admissions*, was delivered for the

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consideration of the panel on 20th January 2011 by the Programme Lead for Alcohol from the Worcestershire Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT).

- 3.3 Shortly after this meeting, in February 2011, the Chair of the panel, Councillor Hartnett, reported before the Overview and Scrutiny on the recent work of the panel. The Alexandra Hospital's policy of admitting intoxicated under age users of alcohol was discussed and Members questioned whether this policy was consistent with the policies of other hospitals. Concerns were also raised that the policy might have created a misconception of the town's drinking culture when compared to that of other areas. Consequently, it was agreed that a letter should be dispatched to both Worcestershire County Council and the relevant Government Minister to clarify the alcohol related admissions practices at hospitals outside Redditch.
- 3.4 Responses were subsequently received from the Worcestershire DAAT and from Anne Milton, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health on this subject. These letters confirmed local policies and current national guidance for alcohol related admissions to hospitals.
- 3.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at a meeting on 14th June 2011, concluded that the subject of alcohol related admissions was suitable for further scrutiny. However, no decisions were reached about the specific focus of this review work or the appropriate body to perform the task. At the request of Members the subject has therefore been submitted for further consideration.

Issues to consider

- 3.6 Any further review of alcohol related admissions rates would need to be referred to the appropriate review body. Separate areas of legislation outline overview and scrutiny powers in local government, including the appropriate location for specific issues to be discussed. These legislative requirements should be noted when considering the appropriate focus and location for a further review of alcohol related admissions to hospital among young people.
- 3.7 Local authority crime and disorder scrutiny committees have been designated with a specific scrutiny role. The remit of this scrutiny committee is to "...scrutinise the work of the community safety Partnership and the partners who comprise it, insofar as their activities relate to the partnership itself". (Home Office, 2009, p 23). The powers do not extend to allowing crime and disorder scrutiny committee's to hold individual partner organisations to account for the independent work of those organisations.

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- 3.8 The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel could, therefore, further consider the subject of alcohol related admissions to hospital. However, the review would need to have a focus specifically relating to activities of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership. Furthermore, Members should note that the Panel has previously received an overview of the subject from the relevant partner organisation represented on the local CDRP and would be duplicating work if they were to receive another overview.
- 3.9 This topic could also be considered as part of a health overview and scrutiny review. The Health and Social Care Act 2001 introduced health overview and scrutiny arrangements. In two-tier local authority areas health overview and scrutiny powers were allocated to the County Council. In addition, it is currently anticipated that the forthcoming Health and Social Care Bill will extend local authority's powers over health to encompass public health issues. (These powers will again be allocated to county councils in two-tier authority areas).
- 3.10 In Worcestershire there is a Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which is co-ordinated by Worcestershire County Council. Each district Council, including Redditch Borough Council, appoints a local representative to the Committee to participate in health scrutiny activities. Worcestershire County Council does delegate health scrutiny powers to district councils in specific circumstances. Decisions as to whether to delegate health scrutiny reviews to district scrutiny committees are assessed on a case by case basis by Worcestershire County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Redditch has never assumed responsibility for a health scrutiny review.
- 3.11 Alcohol related admission rates to hospital have clear implications for public health. Members may conclude that the subject of alcohol related admission rates is a suitable topic for health overview and scrutiny. Again, specific terms of reference for the proposed review would be expected.
- 3.12 Overview and Scrutiny Committees may launch reviews of a variety of subjects considered to be impacting on the local community. This can include services which are not provided by the local authority. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may therefore conclude that they should launch a Task and Finish review of the subject. However, a Task Group would lack the power to require relevant partner organisations to engage a policy review. Moreover, members of a new Task Group might lack the respective expertise of members of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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- 3.13 Alternatively, based on the information provided within this report Members may conclude that sufficient action has already been taken to address this subject. During the course of Overview and Scrutiny meetings a variety of issues may be discussed. These items do not necessarily have to then form the subject of a detailed policy review, particularly if the objectives of such a review remain unclear. In these circumstances it would be legitimate to conclude that no further action is required.

Financial Implications

- 3.14 There are no financial implications.

Legal Implications

- 3.15 The Committee should take into account the legislative powers provided to scrutiny, as detailed above, when considering the appropriate location for further consideration of this issue.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.16 This report has been produced to provide Members with useful guidance in relation to scrutiny of the particular subject matter.
- 3.17 There are a number of implications for community safety in relation to the crime and disorder scrutiny function. These are outlined in further detail above.
- 3.18 There are also clear implications for health inequalities. Again, these are outlined in the report above.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.19 There are no direct customer, equalities or diversity implications.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no risk management implications to this report.

5. APPENDICES

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| Appendix 1 | Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel: Alcohol Related Hospital Admissions |
| Appendix 2 | Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel – Chair’s Update Report, February 2011 |

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Appendix 3	Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel - Relevant extract from the minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2011
Appendix 4	Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Relevant extract from the minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2011.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Home Office, 'National Support Framework: Delivering Safer and Confident Communities' (2009).

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