

## **LICENSING COMMITTEE PRESENTATION**

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for your invitation to address the committee again. As normal this evening I will provide you with a brief overview of policing activity linked to licensing across the district since Christmas.

### **Last 6 months**

I think it best to start with some good news regarding real term and percentage reductions in the amount of crime associated with the Night Time Economy in Redditch town centre. In the 2008/09 crime year 387 offences or 6.1% of the total crime recorded in Redditch that year was linked to the NTE. In the 2010/11 crime year the number of offences had dropped to 317 offences or 5.3% of total crime recorded that year. This is particularly pleasing when similar crime numbers in some other parts of Worcestershire have risen over the same period.

I am very pleased with the town centre crime reductions and hope such progress can be sustained in challenging times for the police service and other public bodies over the next few years.

I am always cautious about claiming that such success is the result of the police and other agencies working together to bring about real change, such as the adoption of the Cardiff model for licensing management.

It will come as no surprise for you to learn that assault and public order offences make up the bulk of offences reported in Redditch town centre. In addition, drugs offences account for 14% of offences reported in the town, almost twice as many in percentage terms, as the next 'worst' district.

This doesn't necessarily mean we have a drugs problem any worse than other locations in the county but we have held some high profile operations in the town, notably in the 2008/09 crime year, when a significant number of drugs offences were detected as a consequence of Operation Magenta which dealt with a drug supply

issue based around the town centre. Operation Wizard in 2009 also accounted for additional detections in that crime year following an operation on an address in Abbey Road.

As drugs offences tend to be recorded only when offenders are caught in possession of substances I would argue that the high percentage of offences recorded shows the proactive stance local police take when dealing with such matters, rather than suggesting Redditch has any more of a drugs issue than the other districts of Worcestershire against which our figures are being compared.

There is a danger that success can breed complacency. I have already cautioned against claims that partnership work was directly responsible for improved NTE crime figures when recession and changing customer needs will also have had an impact on the number of people coming into the town centre.

Our high profile policing operation based on managing the NTE, Operation Capital, has now been replaced by a division-wide scheme renamed Operation Viscount – in essence the same as Capital but changing the officers responsible for its implementation. Viscount will be subject of review to ensure it delivers consistently.

In such challenging times we need to maintain close attention to licensing regulation and continue to apply pressure to managers of premises where consistent problems are occurring.

A timely report by the partnership analyst Emma Clark has provided useful information concerning premises where statistical analysis suggests crime and disorder are most likely to occur across the county. Two local premises have been identified as being relevant to this work and will be the subject of future police and local authority scrutiny over the summer period.

Linked to licensing through the activity of the people involved has been a recent police initiative, Operation Vellum. Vellum was designed to deal with an increasing concern regarding a group of people regularly breaching the DPPO in and around Redditch town centre, drinking alcohol and engaging in antisocial behaviour, particularly in Church Green and nearby roads.

Vellum has been a high profile operation based largely on the Central Local Policing Team and concentrating on the hard core of offenders and gathering evidence sufficient for one-off prosecutions or ASBOs and CRASBOs. I would claim a large degree of success with this operation with local businesses and shopkeepers expressing pleasure at a reduction in the number of people drinking in breach of the DPPO together with a decrease in ASB and an increase in the number of people being able to use the Green for the purpose for which it has always been intended. Some offenders have spent short periods in prison on remand, one CSO was subject of comments by a Vellum nominal prompting a threats to kill enquiry (although not prosecuted as such), one repeat offender will shortly be appearing in court to have a public order matter dealt with following which we have requested a CRASBO be applied to her to assist us in further managing her behaviour.

The impact on licensing comes from the persistent sale of intoxicants to these people by local off licence premises based within the DPPO. In reality these premises commit no offences by selling alcohol and where we can we intercept those in possession of alcohol and remove it prior to them having a chance to consume it. We have explored options around review processes but with the managers of premises committing no offences this has been rejected. With no opportunity to look at the managers of these premises we will need to try and impact upon the offenders themselves with requests for appropriate ASBO/CRASBO conditions to be applied which might see people being banned from individual shops or areas of the town.

Vellum is continuing at present although I will probably stand it down before the commencement of the main holidays to allow staff to concentrate on other priority areas. There is some evidence which suggest our activities have displaced some of the Vellum nominals to other locations including, more recently, the Winyates area. We will have to monitor the impact of such movements carefully.

Touching on your taxi licensing role, the ongoing tension concerning taxi test fees does cause me a concern, only in respect of the ability of the drivers to cause significant disruption on the roads or withdraw their services on key nights of the week if they choose to do so in pursuit of their grievances, with obvious impacts on the community at large. I was able to influence the drivers over their first protest some weeks ago and I know they are keen not to have protests which might be illegal in nature but I am fearful that the taxi association officials with whom Sue and I speak may find themselves overtaken by events if driver anger grows. I mention this

not to put pressure on you concerning your decisions one way or the other but simply to point out the potential difficulties which might arise if the dispute cannot be drawn to a close amicably. I have no doubt that Sue and I, with others, will continue to work with the association to reduce the threat of protests or, if protests are planned, to keep their impact to a minimum wherever possible.

### **The Future**

Last time I spoke to you concerning the plans for licensing provision at Redditch and across the county. Changes have now been made and we share a licensing officer with the rest of the county. I believe it is too early to assess any long term impact on the loss of a dedicated licensing officer for the town but we are well served by Mr Paul Bott, a former police officer with licensing experience, who has a wider remit than his colleagues previously. Despite this he can still be seen regularly in Redditch and is always available to deal with licensing issues together with colleagues from Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

We remain in challenging times in terms of finance and officer numbers. The full implications of our strategic partnership with Warwickshire Constabulary have yet to be identified and we still need to deliver similar services as at present but with less money and people. The immediate future offers some significant challenges to us all and only time will tell how much of an impact there will be on us and our ability to continue to drive down crime and ASB. I hope I'm still here to address you all again in another 6 months!!

Thank you.