

## **AGENDA ITEM**

### **REPORT TO CRIME AND DISORDER SELECT COMMITTEE**

**21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023**

## **STAFF SAFETY IN THE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY**

### **SUMMARY**

Public safety in our night-time economy is a key objective for Stockton on Tees Borough Council. Through the multi-agency efforts of both partners and both our community safety and licensing teams, much has been done to improve feelings of safety whilst enjoying the leisure offer in our town centres. This includes a range of efforts to improve the public space including the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order, high visibility patrols in the town centres and a comprehensive network of CCTV cameras. These efforts compliment an already robust licensing regime, supported by proactive relationships with premises such as Pub Watch and well established multi-agency working.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Consider the content of this report in order to understand the current efforts to promote safety in the night time economy.

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a result of the scrutiny topic recommendation being adopted by the Crime and Disorder Select Committee, a tripartite was held in order to discuss this topic in detail. The tripartite took the form of a desk top exercise, which resulted in a request from the Chair of the Committee for this report to be produced in order to present back to the wider committee for consideration.

### **BACKGROUND**

In August 2023, a jointly commissioned Cleveland wide problem profile of understanding violence in the night time economy was undertaken by Crest Advisory, a think-tank who are experts in areas such as justice, policing and public safety. The report highlighted a number of key findings which are relevant to consider in the context of staff safety in the night time economy although interestingly, the safety of staff working within the night time economy did not feature as an area of specific concern within the findings despite those working in the night time economy contributing to the report itself. The profile also made clear that there is a lack of available baseline data in relation to staff safety in the night time economy especially.

What the problem profile did confirm however is that both police incident (and offence) data and hospital admittance data show clear peaks in demand on Friday and Saturday evenings in particular, though there are a significant number of incidents throughout most afternoons. When focussing on incidents within the NTE in Stockton on Tees, the evidence suggests that 6pm to 6am should be used as a

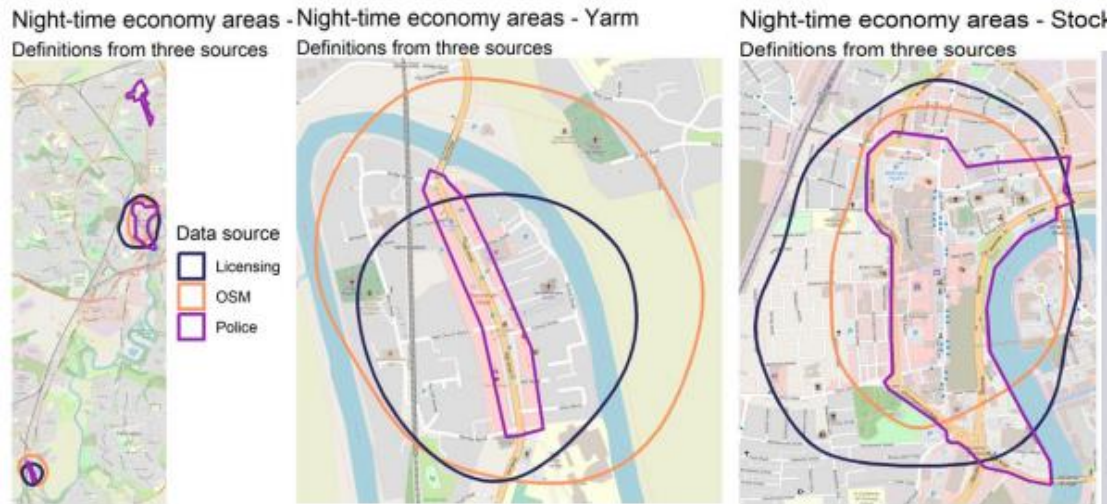
broad definition of NTE 'hot-times' though in some instances it may be sensible to focus this even further on Friday and Saturday nights specifically.

Stakeholders felt there was no clear profile of the 'typical victim' or offender. Most stakeholders highlighted that victims and offenders spanned a wide age range, though there are differences in profiles based on when in the evening people are around. Older cohorts of individuals were identified by stakeholders as being in the NTE earlier in the evenings, while younger individuals are entering NTE areas much later at night. These perceptions were reinforced by the police and hospital data which show a clear transition through the night - from older individuals who are more likely to be victims, offenders, or attend hospital before midnight, to younger individuals who appear in the data after midnight.

A substantial proportion of the offences committed before midnight on Friday and Saturday nights are violence without injury offences. As the night continues though, offences are more severe, with violence with injury becoming more prevalent, and the number of attendances at hospital for assault increasing significantly. Although assault was the main driver of hospital attendances after midnight, particularly with 18-34 year olds, there were still a significant number of alcohol related injuries - particularly for the older age cohorts.

The general decline in the NTE over the past ten years, combined with substantial cuts to services such as the council, police and ambulance service has created a substantial challenge for addressing violence in the night time economy. License holders do not feel they have the resources to implement the safety measures they would like to. They also feel like the services are not supporting them as fully as they should. In contrast, the data suggests that the police and hospitals are dealing with an unmanageable demand across the region, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights (when there can be significant delays in responding to calls), but that the volume of incidents is relatively high from late morning through to the early hours of the next day on a near continuous basis.

Stakeholders felt that the older cohort in particular was leaving the NTE earlier or not venturing out because of fear of violence. Media reports, social media, and word of mouth are all believed to have a significant impact on the likelihood of individuals to go out into the NTE or head home early, and a negative incident at a venue can substantially reduce customer numbers for a long period of time. The cost of living crisis has also led to many people 'pre-drinking' before going out (more so than was previously the case). This further impacts on venues and their ability to survive and results in many potential customers arriving into NTE areas already significantly inebriated. Safety measures that some venues have put in are potentially discouraging potential customers as the fear of violence is so substantial that stakeholder believe the sight of security processes or equipment might suggest the venue is not safe.



## CURRENT MEASURES

### Pub Watch

National Pubwatch is a voluntary organisation set up to promote best practice through supporting the work of local Pubwatch Schemes. Its aim is to achieve a safer drinking environment in all licensed premises throughout the UK. Pubwatch enables licensees to take collective action to ban troublemakers, while promoting effective working relations between licensees, the police, and local authorities. The scheme helps to make licensed premises places where people can enjoy themselves safely.

Pubwatch could be seen as the licensed trade's equivalent of Neighbourhood Watch. The main difference is that a Pubwatch scheme is much more proactive in setting its own objectives and tackling the specific and unique problems faced by the pub on-trade. Pubwatch is not a new concept and has been successfully operating across the United Kingdom for over 40 years including here in Stockton on Tees.

The basic principle of Pubwatch is that its licensee members will agree to work together to improve the safety of their premises, for the benefit of their staff and customers. They will introduce initiatives to try and combat the criminal activity and anti-social behaviour that can often be associated, but not exclusively, with the misuse of alcohol or drugs. Invariably therefore the work of a Pubwatch scheme will be to set standards of acceptable behaviour and act robustly against the small number of individuals who cause problems for the pub trade. This will often result in Pubwatch members agreeing to jointly ban problem individuals who are violent, damage property, use or deal drugs or act in an anti-social manner for a period of time or indefinitely.

Pubwatch is seen as good practice by the Police and Home Office and is a valuable way of demonstrating a commitment to promoting the four licensing objectives under the Licensing Act 2003 and the responsibility of the licensing trade in general. It is also a means to discharge a part of a licensee's health and safety responsibility to their staff and customers.

Pubwatch can protect staff and customers, preserve, and improve trade and fosters good working relationships with the Police, Licensing Authority, and the Courts. Pubwatch meetings are split into five areas here in Stockton on Tees:

- Stockton TC
- Thornaby and Ingleby
- Norton and Estates
- Yarm
- Billingham

Each area has a meeting chair and licensees meet every 2 weeks (last round of meetings was beginning of September). Each area has varying degrees of engagement with the Stockton TC, and Yarm pub watches most attended and effective. Licensing officers attend all meetings along with Police and we use this as a forum to discuss issues, trends and distribute materials such as spiking prevention measures, metal detectors wands and bleed control kits.

### **Multi-Agency Working**

Incidents that occur within all our town centres, including in the night time economy, feature in the established Joint Action Group, made up of key partners across Stockton on Tees including Cleveland Police. Data in relation to incidents, emerging trends, intelligence and feedback are monitored on a regular basis and appropriate actions taken to address problems. This ensures that there is joint ownership of our town centres and that resources from across a range of agencies can be brought to bear in order to quickly resolve emerging issues. Over the past several years, there has been no recorded issues or concerns raised in relation to staff safety in the night time economy and unfortunately incidents involving staff are not recorded separately and therefore baseline information on the extent of this issue is not available.

We do know from this partnership and the work of CURV (Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence), that key issues such as serious violence are closely monitored and the measures put in place could have secondary benefits to staff, as well as visitors to the night time-economy. Recently, funding was made available via the OPCC (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) for measures aimed at tackling violence in the night time economy. This has included improvements to CCTV including increase monitoring, the introduction of the 'Ask for Angela' scheme and the provision of equipment such as metal detectors, spike detection strips, glass and bottle covers as well as additional research and intelligence analysis.

In order to inform the development of our multi-agency approach to issues arising in the night time economy, we also research and consider best practice from around the country which can also be adopted here in Stockton on Tees. This is co-ordinated via both Stockton BID and also the wider Safer Stockton Partnership which also scrutinises both activity and results to ensure that the response is both efficient and impactful.

### **Licensing**

The use of licensing conditions on premises is strictly governed by the law and the conditions implemented must be done so in a reasonable and proportionate way in order to meet with licensing objectives. Under the Licensing Act 2003 conditions can be attached to a licence to promote the four licensing objectives:

- the prevention of crime and disorder
- public safety
- the prevention of public nuisance
- the protection of children from harm.

Conditions include any limitations or restrictions attached to a licence or certificate and essentially are the steps or actions that the holder of the premises licence or the club premises certificate will be required to take or refrain from taking in relation to the carrying on of licensable activities at the premises in question.

Failure to comply with any condition attached to a licence or certificate is a criminal offence, which on conviction is punishable by an unlimited fine or up to six months' imprisonment. The courts have made clear that it is particularly important that conditions which are imprecise or difficult for a licence holder to observe should be avoided.

Licence holders should make provision to ensure that premises users safely leave their premises. Measures that may assist include providing information on the premises of local taxi companies who can provide safe transportation home; and ensuring adequate lighting outside the premises, particularly on paths leading to and from the premises and in car parks, but transport to and from work is not a licensable activity and therefore cannot be considered as a condition attached to a licence and as such can not be enforced.

## **CONCLUSION**

A significant amount of focus is given to ensuring the night time economy offer within Stockton on Tees is safe and managed well. Whilst this is done primarily through our licencing function, a significant amount of work is done by the venues themselves. Likewise, partnership working is at the forefront of our approach to ensure people are safe when visiting, working or indeed living in close proximity to the night time offer in our towns. A significant amount of work is planned this year to compliment what has been achieved so far on violence reduction and to improve the environment around our town centre offer. This has been achieved through the strong working relationships and forums which have already formed such as Pub Watch.

The desktop exercise at the tripartite stage did lead to the conclusion that there would be little to gain from carrying out a full review of this topic in isolation especially given that regular updates on issues such as this can be provided by to the committee for Members generally should it be requested. As far as our current activity goes, national guidance is being adopted, new initiatives to tackle emerging issues are being regularly put in place and we are currently fully maximising our licencing activity to the extent that the current legislation allows. As a result, I recommend that the objectives outlined in the scrutiny review can be met through the existing arrangements already in place as outlined in this report.

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