

CHELTENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

**SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2003**

NIGHT TIME ECONOMY UPDATE AND DRAFT STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMUNITY GROUP

1. Summary and recommendations

- 1.1 On 24th July, 2002, Cabinet considered a report entitled “Crime and Disorder” – alcohol related activities”. The report identified a range of solutions contained in a matrix.
- 1.2 Cabinet adopted many of the proposals contained within the report requesting the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee to formulate a strategy that considers and addresses the broad effects of the night time economy.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 3rd October, 2002, the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a community based strategic liaison group to progress the issues of the night time economy and to formulate a draft strategy.
- 1.4 The group has met on several occasions and has implemented various actions, together with formulating a longer term draft strategy for dealing with the town’s night time economy.
- 1.5 **I recommend that the committee:**
 - **notes the actions of the group to date;**
 - **submits the draft strategy to the cabinet for its consideration prior to wider public consultation;**
 - **supports the various revenue and capital bids identified in the solutions matrix.**

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 3rd October, 2002, considered a report based on the original cabinet report and adopted a set of proposals, viz:

- a range of options which it was felt officers could implement without additional resourcing;
- a range of options which required additional financial, or other resource and/or third party support;
- to establish a community based strategic liaison group to consider and address the broad effects of the night time economy;
- to give the police every assistance to ease late night anti-social behavioural problems;
- to report to cabinet in April 2003 with a draft strategy to tackle a range of existing and new issues as a result of the group's work. (Committee will recall that, having regard to the workload placed upon the group, the Cabinet's original timeframe was considered to be too ambitious. Consequently Cabinet was updated on 6th June, 2003, with a view to reporting to its September meeting with a draft strategy.)

3.0 The draft strategy

- 3.1 As identified in the original report to cabinet on 24th July, 2002, Cheltenham, like many other towns and cities, has experienced a growth in the number of pubs and clubs to the point that they are now the most visible aspect of our night time economy. We are also aware that, while the night time economy injects money into the local economy, it also introduces a number of issues that detract from its popular acceptance and wider use, such as disorder, litter and public urination.
- 3.2 The community based strategic liaison group, in arriving at the draft strategy, felt that the night time economy should not be focused around the consumption of alcohol or aimed exclusively at the youth culture. While there is greater diversity to the town's night time economy, it is increasingly overshadowed by publicity around one aspect, i.e. pubs and clubs, to the detriment of the rest. It is the view of the group, therefore, that everybody should feel welcome in the town at night, and, to this end, the vision of the strategy seeks **"a safe town centre that has a diverse night time economy accessible to all"**. This vision reflects the Community Group's concerns and aspirations over the current state of Cheltenham's night time economy and where its sustainable future lies. It also reflects current government thinking and research and in this respect Cheltenham is very much 'ahead of the game'.
- 3.3 There are no quick fixes and the implementation of the strategy needs to be considered as a long term undertaking. It links to the Cheltenham Community Plan, and the Council's Corporate Business Plan, against which its achievements can be measured. In turn, it links to other core key strategies and policies. It will influence the council's licensing policy statement currently being developed as a requirement of the Licensing Act 2003. Importantly, this policy is likely to have regard to the "cumulative effect" of licensed premises within the town centre and their impact upon the relevant licensing objectives of the Act, namely:
- public safety;

- crime and disorder;
 - public nuisance.
- 3.4 The strategy also inter-relates to proposed Policy RC95A in the emerging Local Plan which details the policy circumstances which must be met for the granting of planning permission to restaurants, night clubs and licensed premises.
- 3.5 Whilst the strategy is commended to you, it is felt fair to identify that, at this stage, it does not carry the support of St. Margaret's People Interested in the Local Environment (SMILE) which has representation on the Community Group. Amongst other things, SMILE feels that the draft strategy concentrates too heavily on economic aspects rather than the wishes of residents.
- 3.6 Whilst the strategy is unlikely ever to totally fulfil the expectations of SMILE or, for that matter, any individual stakeholder group, the circumstances described in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 above should go a long way to meeting some of those expectations. It should be noted that the group shares many of SMILE's aspirations but must await further legislative powers to be able to deliver them. The position of residents is, however, protected by the introduction of important new provisions within the Licensing Act 2003 which provides opportunities for them to object to new premises licences and to seek the review of existing premises licences having regard to the licensing objectives of public safety, prevention of crime and disorder and public nuisance and the protection of children from harm. A separate detailed report on the new Act will be presented to Cabinet on 30 September 2003.

4.0 **Achievements of the Group to date**

- 4.1 As identified in the previous reports, the group has brought together key stakeholders from the Police, Magistrates Court, Cheltenham Business Partnership, Students Union, Area Committee Central, Nightsafe, residents groups and the council.
- 4.2 Since its formation in December 2002, the group has worked steadfastly towards the tasks set by the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The current status on the group's achievements against these tasks is detailed in the attached modified solutions matrix originally determined by Cabinet. The matrix now details specific costs, where known, together with identified responsibilities. It also details what has been and can be achieved within existing budget provision and identifies where further funding is required, together with the group's priority ranking.
- 4.3 While much has been achieved in all task areas, there are some particular noteworthy achievements centred around working in partnership with the Police to promote a safer environment and tackling anti-social behaviour:
- importantly, the town centre policing strategy has changed together with shift arrangements, enabling a higher profile police presence on the streets, together with greatly improved efficiency in the use of police resources;
 - six "hot spot" licensed premises were brought to task in late 2002. As a result, there have been 21 fewer instances of disorder at these premises

during the following six months when compared to the previous six months;

- both the mobile CCTV facility and CCTV vans are now in use to act as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour;
- a protocol and business plan are being developed for the drug screening machine which is now in regular use at night time venues around the town;
- the use of Anti-social Behaviour Orders in the town centre is now being actively pursued.

4.4 While crime and disorder is the most frequently raised issue by the public and the media, the group felt that the town's night time economy did not deserve the negative image often attached to it by the media, and, sad to say, even members of this council. Statistically, Cheltenham is a far safer place to be at night than many other towns and cities throughout the country. Indeed, so much so that various government departments are showing a keen interest in what the council is currently doing to manage its night time economy.

5. Implications

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| 5.1 | Financial : | As detailed in the report, the draft strategy and attached solutions matrix which cabinet will need to consider when formulating its budget for 2004/05 and the medium term. |
| 5.2 | Legal : | There are a number of legal implications which may arise as a result of the individual measures proposed as part of this report and draft strategy. The Legal Section would be consulted at an early stage before any measure is actioned. |
| 5.3 | Personnel : | None arising from this report. |
| 5.4 | Equal opportunities, social justice and anti-poverty | The strategy will contribute to the council's social justice and equal opportunities strategies by achieving a diverse night time economy which is accessible to all. |
| 5.5 | Environmental : | A key aim of the strategy is to improve the cleanliness of the town at night and to improve its environmental amenity. |

Background papers : Cabinet reports – 24.7.02 and 3.6.03

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports – 3.1.02 and 3.4.03.

Notes of Community Group meetings – 4.12.01, 25.2.03, 15.5.03 and 6.8.03.

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