

Cheltenham Borough Council
Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee -
9th July 2007

Cheltenham drugs study report

Report of the Social and Community Overview and
Scrutiny Committee drugs study review group

1. Executive Summary and recommendation

1.1 The issue

1.1.1 This report sets out the findings of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee's drugs study review group, and also highlights the perceptions and thoughts of a number of key agencies involved in drugs intervention, prevention and enforcement work in Cheltenham. The report proposes a series of actions and recommendations which the review group believes that the council may wish to consider adopting in order to help the Council in alleviating or combating drugs problems and issues in Cheltenham.

1.2 The drugs study review group recommend that the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree the recommendations proposed by the review group, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, and agree to present these findings to the Cabinet for further consideration and adoption by the council.

1.3 Summary of implications

1.3.1 Financial

The review group are of the opinion that the majority of its recommendations can be implemented within existing resources. However, a small number of the recommendations proposed, will ultimately require additional funding to be identified and allocated, by both the council and possibly by other statutory agencies and community stakeholders. Further work will be required to properly assess these additional costs.

Contact officer: Paul Jones

E-mail: paul.jones@cheltenham.gov.uk

Tel no: 01242 775154

1.3.2 Legal

There are no legal implications arising out of the general principles behind the report however any proposals that arise out of the report and review team will need to be the subject of input from legal services

Contact officer: Sarah Farooqi, solicitor

E-mail: sarah.farooqi@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.3.3 Human Resources

Currently, the corporate training programme offers courses which although not drugs and alcohol specific, give staff the skills to deal with the resulting aggressive or abusive behaviour. These are: managing aggressive behaviour, a course available to all staff; and a customer care and complaints module, which walks staff through the customer care standards and handbook. There are sections in the handbook that advise staff how to deal with difficult and abusive customers and attend to their own personal safety. Any expenditure for additional job specific training with regards to drugs and/or alcohol related issues will need to be obtained from the relevant divisional budget holders.

Contact officer: Julie McCarthy

E-mail: Julie.McCarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk

Tel no: 01242 264355

1.4 Implications on corporate and community plan priorities

1.4.1 The recommendations proposed by the drugs study review group support the council's corporate and community plan priorities as set out in Our Business Plan 2004-2007 and as proposed for inclusion within the council new Business Plan 2008-2011. These include:

- (1) we will reduce crime and disorder and the fear of crimes in our communities;
- (2) we will protect and improve the environment of Cheltenham;
- (3) we will re-dress the imbalances in our communities and build strong health geographical communities, and communities of interest;
- (4) we will enhance the town's reputation as a national and international culture centre, promote a healthy and sustainable economy and provide opportunities to broaden and enrich sport, play and cultural experiences; and
- (5) the Council's organisational priority we will be an excellent and sustainable council delivering high standards of service

2. Introduction

2.1 The drugs study review report, appendices A to E (copy held in the members room) outline the findings and recommendations of the drugs study review group which was established by the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2006, at the request of the Cabinet.

2.2 The review group was tasked with reviewing the findings of the University of Gloucestershire's Drugs in Cheltenham Report (April 2006) which was commissioned

by the Council, and in addition to looking more closely at drug problems and issues in Cheltenham. The review group was also given the task of bringing a series of recommendations back to the council, as to how the council could be more proactively involved in combating drugs and alcohol issues across the town.

- 2.3** The review group considered the university's report and its findings, and discussed these with a range of external agencies, in order to determine whether the picture presented by the university, accurately reflected the drugs problem in Cheltenham. In light of these discussions, it was felt that the university's report did not necessarily reflect the true picture in Cheltenham, and the report failed to reflect the wider views and perceptions of the key agencies involved in both drugs intervention and enforcement work within the town, with the report offering more of a national perspective than a local perspective.
- 2.4** The perceptions of the key agencies involved in drug prevention, intervention and enforcement work are detailed in Appendix B and C.
- 2.5** The recommendations of the drug review group, as detailed in Appendix 1, reflect many of the views of the external agencies, and propose a range of opportunities which should enable the council itself to be more proactive in both combating and alleviating drugs problems and issues across the town itself. Comments provided by the proposed CBC lead officers in response to these recommendations are detailed in Appendix 1A.
- 2.6** The recommendations proposed by the review group will:
- (1) require a number of the council's services to implement more proactive measures and policies to help combat and address drug and alcohol problems;
 - (2) involve the council in implementing more stringent controls in its licensing and enforcement of Cheltenham's licensed premises (i.e. pubs, clubs, bars, restaurants and nightclubs), as well as in encouraging more responsible drinking and a zero-tolerance on drug taking and drugs pushing;
 - (3) look at opportunities for closer working with external agencies involved in drugs prevention, intervention and enforcement work, as well as at potential opportunities to help support and fund this work;
 - (4) require the council to clamp down more effectively on drug and alcohol abuse within its own parks, green spaces and public buildings, and look at opportunities to extend the current alcohol free zones which are currently in force across the town
- 2.7** The review group believe that the majority of its recommendations could be implemented at no additional cost to the council, and be covered by existing budgetary spends. However a small number of the recommendations proposed, will ultimately require additional funding to be identified and allocated, by both the council and possibly by other statutory agencies and community stakeholders. Further work will be needed to be undertaken to properly assess these costs.

3. Background

- 3.1** In April 2006 the Cabinet commissioned the University of Gloucestershire to produce a report to look at drug problems and issues in Cheltenham, and at the perceptions of the agencies involved in combating or alleviating drugs problem in Cheltenham.
- 3.2** The University's report was completed and submitted to the council in June 2006 and was presented to the Cabinet.
- 3.3** Following the submission of this report, Cabinet tasked the Social and Community

Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the responsibility of:

- (1) reviewing the university's findings and recommendations
- (2) exploring the context of this problem in Cheltenham,
- (3) considering possible ways and opportunities which would enable the council to be more proactive in both combating and alleviating drugs problems and issues across the town.

- 3.4** The Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee established the drugs study review group in July 2006, and subsequently agreed its terms of reference (see Appendix D).
- 3.5** The drugs review group consisted of three members from the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Cllr. Barbara Driver (Chair), Cllr. Tina Franklin and Cllr. Diggory Seacome, with officer support being provided by: Peter Woolley, Assistant Director Community Services; Trevor Gladding, Community Safety Manager; Richard Gibson, Corporate Policy Manager and Geoff Sloman, Community Development Manager.
- 3.6** In addition to reviewing the university's report, the review group also looked at the current perceptions of drug problems and issues in Cheltenham, in consultation with a number of key agencies involved in drugs prevention and intervention work. These included: the Gloucestershire Drugs and Alcohol Team (DAAT), Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Primary Care Trust, the Gloucestershire Youth Service, Gloucestershire Local Education Authority, the Gloucestershire Drugs and Alcohol Service (GDAS), the Cheltenham Regeneration Partnership and the Cheltenham Substance Action Group (Cheltenham SAG).

In addition the review group also met with the Gloucestershire Police Constabulary and representatives from the Cheltenham Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to review the drug enforcement agencies own perceptions of these problems. The findings of these discussions are attached in Appendix B and C.

Addition information for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.7 The Cheltenham Reduction of Alcohol Related Violence (RARV) Project –** Members of the Social and Community Overview Scrutiny Committee are reminded of the fact that the council's Community Safety Team, in conjunction with the Gloucestershire Police Constabulary and Cheltenham Community Safety Partnership have been working on a project supported by Government Office South West (GOSW). The RARV project was aimed at addressing and tackling the growing problem of incidents of alcohol related violence, that are being experienced in Cheltenham. Principally as part of the town's night time economy, and ultimately in an effort aimed at improving the safety and enjoyment of the residents of Cheltenham, the towns night time economy users as well as the town's visitors. The RARV project, which has now been completed, has produced a report aimed directly at addressing alcohol related violence, in addition to a code of practice, which is intended to have a positive impact upon the town's night time economy, licensed premises and operators. The findings of the project, and its codes of practice, were launched at an event held on 26 June 2007, at the Gloucestershire University, Park Campus. The event included the official launch of the RARV project and its accompanying codes of practice, and saw the launch of the On-line Pub Watch Scheme operated by Cheltenham's Night Safe and Day Safe provisions
- Potential impact of the RARV project - it is hoped that the RARV project, and its accompanying codes of practice, will have major impact upon addressing and combating alcohol related violence problems in Cheltenham, and in turn this project

will further complement the council's own plans of addressing drugs and alcohol problems, as detailed in the drugs study review group's report.

For more information about the RARV project, please contact Trevor Gladding the council's Community Safety and Enforcement Team Leader at Trevor.Gladding@cheltenham.gov.uk or alternatively view the RARV projects finding and codes of practice on the Cheltenham Community Safety Partnerships website pages at www.cheltenhamssafety.org.

4. Consultation

- 4.1** Consultation was undertaken with a number of key agencies involved in combating and alleviating drugs and alcohol problems in Cheltenham. Meetings were held with six key agencies involved in drugs intervention work in Cheltenham, in September 2006, and with drugs enforcement agencies in December 2006. (See section 3.5 for details)
- 4.2** The review process adopted by the drugs study review group was formally agreed by members of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. (See Appendix D)
- 4.3** Members of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been kept informed of developments with this review, with two briefing/discussion papers being presented at committee meetings held on 10 January 2007 and 2 April 2007.
- 4.4** The University of Gloucestershire consulted with a small number of agencies involved in addressing drug problems and issues across Cheltenham, as well as at the national picture of drug problems and abuse in Great Britain when developing their report. This report has subsequently been issued to a number of key agencies and partnerships, as well as being presented to the Cabinet.
- 4.5** In addition the new Cheltenham Community Safety Partnership has recently requested an opportunity to discuss the findings and recommendations of the council's drug study review group, at a future meeting of the partnership.

Background Papers

Drugs in Cheltenham: A report on agency perceptions in Cheltenham. Report produced by the University of Gloucestershire – June 2006

Second interim report of the drugs study review group: Information/discussion paper: Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2 April 2007

Drugs study review update. Information/discussion paper: Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 January 2007

Contact Officer

This report was produced on behalf of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee's drugs study review group. The chair of the drugs study review group is Cllr. Barbara Driver

This report was finalised on behalf of review group by Geoff Sloman, Community Development Manger, 01242 775213, Geoff.Sloman@cheltenham.gov.uk

Accountability

Cabinet Member Stronger and Safer Communities

Scrutiny Function

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee