

To the Chair and Members of the LICENSING COMMITTEE

REDUCE THE STRENGTH CAMPAIGN

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Nigel Ball Chris McGuiness	Town	No

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a response to street drinking, anti-social behaviour and alcohol related health in Doncaster, Public Health recommends that DMBC Licensing Committee support a campaign for off licences within Doncaster Town centre to adopt a voluntary initiative to remove from sale low price high-strength alcohol products. Similar "Reduce the Strength" campaigns have proved successful in other parts of the country, most notably in Ipswich and Portsmouth. Reducing the Strength models used vary from place to place, but target white cider and super strength lager above 6.5 per cent alcohol by volume (abv).

The Health and Social Care Information Centre estimates that about 1.6 million adults in England are dependent on alcohol, and alcohol misuse can lead to a wide range of conditions, including cancer, heart disease, strokes and liver disease. The total annual cost to society of alcohol-related harm is estimated to be £21bn. The NHS incurs £3.5bn a year in costs related to alcohol (Public Health England 2014).

In Doncaster there were an estimated 59,827 alcohol-related admissions and attendances costing an estimated £17.2m in 2012 (Department of Health 2013, Local Alcohol Profiles England 2014). Much of this can be linked to the availability of "super-strength" alcohol.

As of May 2017, the town centre Ward has 45 premises that sell alcohol for consumption off the premises in a population of 19,535 (DMBC 2015). Lower Wheatley which makes up 28.4% of the Doncaster Town Centre Ward Profile fares significantly worse than the rest of Doncaster in a number of health and social indicators. Alcohol Specific Admissions to DRI for residents in this area is the second worse in Doncaster Borough and both Emergency Admissions to DRI and Emergency Admissions for Self Harm are significantly worse the Doncaster Average.

2. EXEMPT REPORT

Not applicable

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee are asked to receive, note and comment on the content of the report.

4. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

There is a small cohort of people with complex needs and vulnerabilities who are either homeless or living in hostels within the footprint of the town centre ward. Although this group of people are small in comparison to the wider Doncaster population they place a high level of demand on public services. A successful Reduce the Strength campaign would see benefits to the town centre as local businesses in other areas which have similar initiatives reporting declines in anti-social behaviour and street drinking.

5. BACKGROUND

The most effective approach for councils to take in managing alcohol will be to use their health and licensing roles to target specific issues and problems arising from the consumption of alcohol, rather than taking a universal approach that affects those who are drinking responsibly (Local Government Association 2016).

The Portsmouth campaign started in November 2013 and now has over 112 stores signed up and in the 12 months between October 2013 and October 2014, saw a 39% drop in street drinkers in Portsmouth and a 43% drop in associated incidents.

The Ipswich approach to street drinking involved the provision of treatment, education and alternative accommodation in addition to removing selected products from the shelves. It is this comprehensive package that has achieved the significant reductions in street-drinking and alcohol-related violence in the town

I propose the "Reduce The Strength" campaign cover all off-licences within the town centre, Broxholme Lane, Christ Church Road, Copley Road, Highfield Road and Nether Hall Road where we have a Cumulative Impact Zone in place. This is also where the main focus of the complex lives work is also being undertaken and like the Ipswich model will include other interventions to pro-actively identify and flexibly support these vulnerable people. Taking high strength, low cost beers and ciders off the shelves will add to the other work being undertaken to make Doncaster a safer and healthier place.

6. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

An alternative approach would be for identified street drinkers in and around the town centre be made known to local off-licences in the town centre Ward to ensure those individuals are not served. However this would require provision of community safety and policing support to help shopkeepers refuse sales.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

Since December 2016 Team Doncaster has had a strategic focus on people with complex dependencies including homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, offending behaviour, mental ill health and poor physical health. This new way of working of a multi-agency outreach and engagement service for people with complex needs aims to reduce anti-social behaviour, begging and homelessness in Doncaster town centre.

In April 2017, Doncaster was chosen to take part in a Home Office Initiative focussing on reducing crime and disorder related to alcohol particularly within the town centre. The Local Alcohol Action Area initiative will run for two years with support from Home Office mentors who have successfully tackled the issues that they face and will come together to problem solve and share best practice. This Home Office backed initiative and the on-going complex lives work taking place in the town centre makes this an ideal time and opportunity to implement this campaign.

8. IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	<p>Public Health wants to contribute to the Licensing process in a constructive and proportional way that is not to the detriment of the local economy. Since 2013 public health have been included as one of the responsible authorities under the Licensing Act 2003.</p> <p>Public Health can contribute to the licensing regime and likewise licensing can contribute to public health (PHE 2013)</p>
	<p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	<p>Public Health can contribute expertise and intelligence to the Licensing process to limit alcohol-related violence, anti-social behaviour and the protection of children from harm.</p>
	<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	<p>The recommended approach will make a direct contribution the quality of the environment in the town centre.</p>

	All families thrive. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	
	Council services are modern and value for money.	
	Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance.	

9. RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

There is a risk that street drinkers will drink more of lower strength alcohol products to attain the same affect or disperse to where the initiative is not in place. Evidence suggests from others areas who have similar schemes that street drinkers are more likely to engage in alcohol services and get support for their drinking once the higher strength products are not available. The initiative will be closely monitored with premises on the edge of the proposed area regularly consulted with whether they are seeing more people buying high strength products.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

In considering introducing such a scheme care must be taken to ensure that the rules set out in the Competition Act 1998 are not breached. This legislation states that engaging in undertakings within the meaning of competition law that result in anticompetitive behaviour can incur significant penalties, including significant fines. However, the definition of undertaking is limited to firms or other entities that are engaged in commercial activity. While there is clearly a risk to retailers and the Council arising from some aspects of Reducing the Strength schemes, the risk is manageable if the Council builds in certain features to their schemes. The key point is to ensure that retailers are aware they must make individual and independent decisions about whether to participate in such schemes.

In addition the Licensing Act also places restrictions on the development of such schemes. Reducing the Strength conditions on licences should be approached with caution and never as part of a blanket approach. Two key considerations are that conditions should promote the licensing objectives. Standard conditions should be avoided: conditions should relate to individual premises. If these two criteria are met, then the wording of the clause should be carefully considered. It must be: appropriate, proportionate, understandable, achievable, enforceable, not duplicated in other primary legislation, individual and tailored to the premises.

The LGA have issued detailed guidance on the set up of such schemes and it is advised that consideration is given to this guidance when setting up the Scheme as well as ensuring appropriate legal advice is sought.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This initiative will be funded from the Public Health grant, within the approved budget for 2017/18 £20k has been allocated against substance misuse discretionary budgets. This initiative is expected to cost approx. £1k for print and design costs. There is also a dedicated communications post funded from the Public Health budget and this role will actively deal with this proposal.

12. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

No human resource implications

13. TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

No technology implications

14. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

No equality implications

15. CONSULTATION

Engaging with local retailers and businesses throughout the design process is key to a successful initiative. An approach where retailers are seen as a partner in the scheme which actively encourages feedback will be adopted. Equally, it is important to engage with local partners including the police, health services, support agencies and the third sector. A letter has been drafted outlining the scheme and the benefit to the retailers with a follow up visit to be arranged with Andy Steele SYP, DMBC Licensing and Public Health. Also a marketing campaign will be launched to promote the scheme with an identifiable Reduce the Strength logo for retailers to display.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Alcohol Policy UK (2016) Evaluation of Reduce the Strength schemes in two London Boroughs

<http://www.alcoholpolicy.net/2016/06/evaluation-of-reduce-the-strength-schemes-in-two-london-boroughs.html>

Local Government Association (2016) Reducing the strength; Guidance for councils considering setting up a scheme

<http://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/reducing-strength-guidanc-795.pdf>

Home Office (2016) Modern Crime Prevention Strategy

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509831/6.1770_Modern_Crime_Prevention_Strategy_final_WEB_version.pdf

Alcohol Concern (2011) White Cider and street drinkers. Recommendations to reduce harm

<https://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=82e506be-e44d-4094-b81a-7444414ed1e3>

Public health and the Licensing Act 2003 – guidance note on effective participation by public health teams (PHE 2013)

<http://www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/phe-licensing-guidance-2014.pdf>

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