

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY AD-HOC PANEL - REDUCING
ALCOHOL RELATED HARM TO CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

10.00am 10 FEBRUARY 2009

BANQUETING SUITE, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors , Duncan and McCaffery

Other Members present: Councillors

PART ONE

14. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

14a. Declaration of Substitutes

14.1 No substitutes are permitted on Ad-hoc Scrutiny Panels

14b. Declarations of Interests

14.2 There were none.

14c. Declaration of Party Whip

14.3 There was none.

14d. Exclusion of Press and Public

14.4 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

14.5 **RESOLVED** – That the press and public be not excluded form the meeting.

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

15. That the minutes of the meeting held on the 22 January 2009 need to be approved and signed by the Chairman.

16. CHAIRMAN' S COMMUNICATIONS

16.1 Apologies have been sent from the Councillor Ann Norma (Chairman).

17. EVIDENCE FROM WITNESSES

17.1 Evidence from **Sue Dixon (SD), Head of Security for the First Quench Retailing** (formally known as the Thresher Group) and **Chris Denman (CD), Area Manager for Threshers and the Local**

17.2 SD told members that there were 1500 branches with 4 different brand names: Threshers, Wine Rack, the Local & Hadows in Scotland; of which there were 30 stores in Brighton & Hove.

17.3 SD informed the panel around a million people were challenged annually and a third of these were refused. All refusals were recorded on the tills and in books and this information was collated and analysed to identify anomalies.

CD explained that any anomalies were investigated and compared with company and store averages. A "compliant" Store Manager generally meant that refusals would be lower in these stores, as young people would not shop at these branches.

17.4 SD informed members that the company derives no benefit from under 18 sales as it would damage their reputation which would not exceed potential income.

17.5 SD told members that new staff completed an induction, filled out a booklet, watched a DVD which covered mechanisms to prevent underage selling of alcohol and had to be signed off by their Manager before being authorised to use the tills. These inductions and training materials were developed by working with Trading Standards.

17.6 SD informed members that identification is asked for, when any customer looks younger than 21: "Challenge 21". This is being moved to "Challenge 25". This makes identification of under 18's easier for staff. Accepted forms of ID are Passport, Driving Licence and any other accredited ID. Test purchases are carried out with over 18's and over a 100 test purchases are carried out nationally per month; from this the company can identify problem areas and target their work on these.

CD confirmed that all Brighton and Hove stores were working to Challenge 25 already

17.8 It was advised that Partnership working with local authorities, the Police and Trading Standards was the best way forward. It was noted that enforcement has a role but dealing with issues at an early stage is better and to act on any intelligence to deal with the matter swiftly worked best.

- 17.9 In answer to a question as to how many challenges Brighton and Hove had, it was estimated at around 25/30 per store, per week and challenges were higher in the summer. The exact figures would be forwarded onto the panel.
- 17.10 In relation to a question on what happens to the information about refusals, it was explained that the District Manager and Licensing Manager collate and investigate the information on a store basis.
- CD added that store visits are arranged to stores that have anomalies and an investigation would take place by speaking with staff. All stores within each area are visited on a 6 weekly basis.
- 17.11 In response to a question as to where under 18's were sourcing their alcohol and whether proxy sales were the problem, it was advised that staff are trained on proxy purchasing by looking at unusual buying patterns and that staff shouldn't sell if they are suspicious of proxy sales being undertaken.
- The Panel were informed that shoplifting was an issue and it was thought that 60% of alcohol consumed by underage drinkers came from homes.
- 17.12 In answer to a query about what information in stores is available for parents, it was noted that stores have been involved in local area schemes where leaflets were put into customers' bags. However it was noted that more education was required.
- 17.13 Tony Rickwood- Portslade Tesco's Store Manager commented that there were many instances of staff overhearing parents asking their children what alcohol they would like their parents to purchase for them. In these experiences the retailer would refuse these sales.
- 17.14 CD informed the panel that refusals do vary from store to store. Stores with higher footfall have higher refusals and smaller "community" stores have lower refusals. Under 18's do not shop at their local stores as there is more chance that they will be refused as the Retailer will probably know their parents.
- 17.15 In response to a question as to whether there are more refusals in the east of Brighton (as underage drinking is worst in the east of city), it was noted that this hadn't been identified.
- 17.16 In response to a question from a Youth Council representative as to whether it would be possible to scan an universal ID card which could total up the amount of alcohol purchased and flag up if the individual was over a guidance level and the possibility that proxy sales may be occurring, TR explained that technically it would not be possible to collate this type of data from the different retailers.
18. Evidence from **David Solomon (DS), TESCO Express, Store Manager -Droveaway, Hove** and **Tony Rickwood (TR), TESCO, Store Manager – Portslade**
- 18.1 DS informed members that TESCO's had a vigorous induction training programme, which included "Think 21", a buddy system, plus training updates, refresher training, till prompts (with the date of birth information), a DVD and also regular team meetings.

TR handed out training materials that all staff including managers had to complete and noted that there was more comprehensive training for the Licensees at each store. There were "Quarterly Due Diligence Reviews" that a Designated Premises Supervisor completed which reviewed their stores compliance.

- 18.2 The panel noted how managers backed staff with the "you say no and we say no policy" when a transaction was refused.
- 18.3 DS informed the panel how the non-compliance is identified with test purchases, and explained how these stores are targeted for up skilling. It was also very important to work with the Police, Trading Standards and the community and advertise the no selling of alcohol to under 18's policy around the store.
- 18.4 TR explained how there were very robust systems in place and that he had worked hard to engage with the local Police, to increase store visits which had an impact on reducing theft.
- 18.5 TR told members how it was not in TESCO's interest to sell alcohol to under 18's.
- 18.6 In answer to a question on how young staff challenge under 18's, TR informed the panel that staff under 18 had to have a supervisor authorise any alcohol sales they made. This then prevents under 18 store staff selling to their under 18 friends. TR explained how TESCO's are moving to the "Think 25" scheme.

SD informed members that all retailers were moving to the "Think 25" scheme, expect Waitrose. However independents would not necessarily follow.

- 18.7 In response to a question as to whether there was an increase in sales since the Licensing Act 2003 was implemented, SD told members that the Act had meant that a tighter regime was in operation and it was hard to determine as this is a very high profile topic and is in the press regularly.
- 18.8 TR informed the panel how there had been a significant improvement in compliance since legislation made individual staff vulnerable to prosecution as well as the retail company.
- 18.9 In answer to a question whether cheap alcohol had increased the levels of drinking, TR felt that people weren't buying more cheap alcohol.
- 18.10 TR informed the panel that by increasing the cost of alcohol it would not have any affect as customers wouldn't trade down to cheaper drinks and that when the VAT had been reduced recently; there wasn't an increase in alcohol sales.
- SD noted that alcohol was cheap in France and there were no major issues there.
- 18.11 In answer to a question why young people were drinking more, TR informed the panel that alcohol is increasingly difficult for young people to get from retailers and that more adults were purchasing it for them.

SD questioned whether young people were drinking more or whether anti-social behaviour had increased.

- 18.12 In response to questions as to whether shoplifting was an issue, SD told members that it was a problem as there was little legal deterrent (fixed penalty notice for a first offence). Retailers find it challenging to balance attractive store layouts with crime prevention measures.

Shoplifting varies with different areas and different products.

TR informed the panel how alcohol is purchased with weekly shopping on a regular basis.

- 18.13 In answer to a question on whether there is information for parents about not purchasing alcohol for their underage children, TR responded he could not recall any such information and that parents had a lack of understanding on the subject.

- 18.14 In answer to a question on what recommendations would they make TR responded that the local Police are the key and their support to retailers was invaluable.

Members noted that SD recommended partnership working as retailers were committed to eliminating sales to under 18's and that any intelligence could be dealt with swiftly. Additionally direct links with the retailers Central Office would be useful for more proactive working. It was also pointed out that enforcement does have a negative impact on retailers.

TR informed members that Trading Standards could do with engaging with Retailers more in the future.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 19.1 No other business was discussed.

The meeting concluded at 11.00am

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of