

## ABERDEEN LOCAL LICENSING FORUM

23 April 2009

Present:- Allan McIntosh, Convener; Jennie Biggs (substituting for Dr. Lesley Wilkie), Mary Crawford, Ken Eddie, Ian Haddock, Harry Miller, Gerard Rattray, Diane Sande (Licensing Standards Officer), Sergeant Barry Skinner (substituting for Inspector John Soutar, Grampian Police), Councillor Martin Greig and Depute Provost John West.

Also:- Councillor Jaffrey, Convener, Aberdeen City Licensing Board, Constable Fiona Duncan (Grampian Police) and Mr. Duce, Aberdeen Street Pastors.

### **APOLOGIES**

1. Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillor Collie, William Christie, Sohail Faruqi, Murray Leys, David Pattinson, Inspector John Soutar (Sergeant Barry Skinner substituting), Dr. Lesley Wilkie (Jennie Biggs substituting) and George Wyatt.

### **STREET PASTORS**

2. Mr. James Duce gave a presentation on the history of the establishment of Street Pastors which now operate in more than eighty locations throughout the UK. Each scheme is run locally and is part of a national network. All schemes work in close partnership with other agencies including the local authority and the local police force. The scheme in Aberdeen was the first to be established in Scotland and there are now schemes in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness, Perth, Stirling and Inverclyde. There are fifty trained volunteers working in Aberdeen and by October this year it is hoped a further twenty-five volunteers will have been recruited and trained. The volunteers pay £300 for their training either from their own funds or they are sponsored via their church. There is a rigorous training and scrutiny process. Training takes place on twelve Saturdays involving multi-agency input. Application forms and references and Disclosure checks are carefully scrutinised. The scheme in Aberdeen has been largely self-financing with some initial start-up costs met from the local business community, Grampian Police and the Lord Provost's Charitable Trust. However, consideration is being given to applying to appropriate organisations for funding as there is a need to expand the scheme and to develop its efficiency and effectiveness in relation to administration and record keeping.

Even with limited administrative support, statistics do show that the Pastors in Aberdeen have intervened in more than seventy assaults and incidents of anti-social behaviour in the first six months of operation. This has meant that Grampian Police and other agencies have been able to save resources as they are often not called in to deal with these incidents. Pastors are often able to defuse situations and encourage people to go home. Street Pastors are part of the Shop Safe Radio System. If they witness incidents they can call the CCTV monitoring room and they can also offer assistance to doormen. People spoken to on city centre streets have been referred to appropriate agencies such as Social Work, Housing and voluntary organisations such

as the Cyrenians. Street Pastors have also assisted on more than 250 occasions where they have summoned an ambulance to help someone in distress. Interested individuals have been invited to accompany the Street Pastors to see their activities for themselves. Diane Sande, Licensing Standards Officer, accompanied a patrol recently and she confirmed that Pastors were able to assist vulnerable young girls in particular by following them to make sure that they got home safely.

Mr. Duce advised that the commitment for volunteers was to be available one night per month to patrol the city centre area. Patrols occur between 10.00pm and 4.00am from Friday evening to the early hours of Sunday morning. Teams of six or nine volunteers carry out the patrols. Volunteers must be 18 or over, be committed Christians and be able to demonstrate through the interview and training process that they are team players. No strings are attached to the assistance offered by Street Pastors for example in relation to church or spiritual issues.

Mr. Duce was thanked for his presentation and he answered a number of questions including giving an opinion on the proportion of people in the city centre on Friday and Saturday nights who are under the influence of alcohol. Mr. Duce advised that of the pedestrians in the city centre on Friday and Saturday nights approximately one-third were fairly drunk. He considers the main problem area relates to people on a rare night out perhaps connected with their work or business who are not used to consuming a lot of alcohol and have not thought through how they will get home or how to cope if they get isolated from their companions. There is also evidence to suggest that vulnerable young girls are often part of these Friday night/Saturday night crowds. Mr. Duce expressed a willingness to assist in the distribution of Alcohol Signpost Cards which will also be distributed via the Police, at Accident and Emergency Departments, via Community Wardens, etc. Street Pastors are linked into the Healthy Living Network and are keen to contribute to delivery of the Aberdeen Alcohol Strategy which was recently the subject of extensive consultation.

During discussion of possible sources of future funding for the Street Pastors, it was noted that one option would be to approach places of entertainment which charge for admission to enquire if they would donate a proportion of this revenue to the Street Pastors Scheme.

### Action

**Mr. Duce was thanked for his informative presentation and the Forum welcomes the significant voluntary contribution by citizens to improving the quality of life by actively promoting safety and wellbeing in difficult circumstances in the city centre on Friday and Saturday nights. Mr. Duce was encouraged to make contact with Dr. Lesley Wilkie as she and her colleagues in Public Health would be interested to develop initiatives. Mr. Duce was encouraged to apply for financial assistance via the Chief Executive of Aberdeen City Council and the Chief Constable at the appropriate time as it was noted that he and his colleagues are at the early stages of considering the best way to develop their services and the associated funding requirements.**

### **MINUTES**

**3. The Forum had before the Minute of the Meeting held on 26 February, 2009 and of the Forum Sub-Committee of 2 April, 2009.**

**The Forum resolved:-**

- (i) to approve the Minutes;
- (ii) to note the appreciation by Jennie Biggs on behalf of Richard Carey as Chair of the JADAT for the response on the draft Alcohol Strategy for Aberdeen 2008/2018 and that responses are expected shortly from the Community Safety Partnership; and
- (iii) to note that Harry Miller had obtained information from Francesca Martin, Alcohol Support Limited, that her services involve working with children whose parents have substance misuse problems and there has been no subsequent follow-up by parents who have received letters from Grampian Police in respect of under age drinking.

**ALCOHOL RELATED DISORDER PROFILE - ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE**

4. The Forum considered the Licensing Offences section of the report entitled "Alcohol Related Disorder Profile - Aberdeen City Centre" which was considered by The Aberdeen City Alliance in October, 2008 and that The Alliance had requested the Forum to consider this section and investigate whether other Licensing Boards have a stronger strategic policy framework to work within than Aberdeen City's Licensing Board.

Neil Carnegie, Community Safety Manager, advised that the Community Safety Partnership had established a small Focus Group to prepare a report for The Aberdeen City Alliance on priority actions arising from the report. Their work will include identifying best practice elsewhere in Scotland to recommend to The Aberdeen City Alliance.

Councillor Jaffrey, Convener of Aberdeen Licensing Board advised that she had attended a Licensing Board Convention in Edinburgh and had gained valuable information from the representatives from Lothian and Borders Police, Strathclyde Police and Fife Police. Although Grampian Police make written submissions to Conventions they are not represented. Councillor Jaffrey was particularly impressed with a successful pilot initiative on under-age drinking which took place in Fife and formed the basis for the current Scottish Government's proposals in relation to considering legislation to raise the minimum age for off-sales purchases to 21.

The Forum noted that it would have an opportunity to comment on the Aberdeen Licensing Board's policy on overprovision which it requires to adopt by September, 2009.

**The Forum resolved:-**

to request the Clerk to obtain background information from the Licensing Boards in Glasgow and Fife on their policy frameworks including the Play Safe Initiative in Glasgow for consideration at a future Forum meeting together with the outcomes of the Focus Group work established by the Community Safety Partnership.

## **“CHANGING SCOTLAND’S RELATIONSHIP WITH ALCOHOL - A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION”**

5. The Forum had before it a copy of the Summary of Actions from the Scottish Government’s publication “Changing Scotland’s Relationship with Alcohol - A Framework for Action”.

Harry Miller and Jennie Biggs informed the Forum that the Alcohol Task Group met earlier today and agreed to align the Alcohol Strategy to the four categories of actions in the Scottish Government’s Framework, namely (1) Reduced Consumption, (2) Supporting Families and Communities, (3) Positive Attitude, Positive Choices, and (4) Improved Support and Treatment. The Scottish Government’s Summary of Actions will assist in the delivery of the Aberdeen Alcohol Strategy and in meeting the Health, Efficiency, Access and Treatment (HEAT) targets which are incorporated into the Single Outcome Agreement between the Scottish Government and public sector organisations in Aberdeen. Sergeant Barry Skinner advised that Grampian Police were about to resume test purchase operations and he confirmed that from his experience working in Aberdeenshire an off-sales licence had been suspended where two breaches of legislation were detected within a fourteen day period after a second visit. Councillor Jaffrey advised that Members of the Licensing Board would like to visit off-sales licensed premises in addition to the on-sales premises inspections the Board undertakes. Councillor Jaffrey has attended meetings to discuss problems of patrons of events at the AECC purchasing and consuming alcohol in off-sales premises in the surrounding area before arriving at the AECC. Councillor Jaffrey explained that the Aberdeen Licensing Board is not informed by Grampian Police of the first offence in respect of under age sales of alcohol by holders of off-sales licences and are only informed if there is a repeat offence.

Sergeant Skinner advised the Forum that in most cases where parents receive letters in respect of their child’s under-age drinking the policeman who found their child visits them to hand over the letter. The incidents are recorded by staff in the Child Protection Unit. Grampian Police work with health, education and social work colleagues to comply with the Getting It Right for Every Child policy and there is evidence of partnership working. The Grampian Information Sharing Protocol is followed and in appropriate cases there will be referrals to the Children’s Reporter. There may be other opportunities to be more pro active in encouraging parents to accept their responsibilities and to encourage the take-up of use of specialist services and outreach services. It may be appropriate to focus on adults who purchase or supply alcohol to children and to focus on under age drinkers themselves in addition to seeking to punish licensees who commit an offence.

### **The Forum resolved:-**

to note that the Scottish Government’s publication will be a useful reference document and the Summary of Actions are largely in keeping with the actions in the Alcohol Strategy and that a number of agencies in Aberdeen will welcome the Scottish Government’s intentions to introduce a minimum price per unit of alcohol as a mandatory condition of Premises Licences and Occasional Licences.

## **BOTTLE RECEPTACLES IN LICENSED PREMISES**

6. The Forum had before it a letter from the Clerk to the Licensing Board requesting the Forum to endorse an initiative which has the support of Grampian Police to encourage licensed premises to have receptacles for depositing glass bottles inside the premises. The receptacles are designed to make it impossible to remove bottles after they have been placed in them. In his letter Chief Superintendent Donald advised that some licensed premises in Aberdeen have used these receptacles since 2005 and Grampian Police have no evidence of glass or bottle assaults within those premises since then. PC Fiona Duncan of Grampian Police advised the Forum that the Best Bar None Scheme endorses the use of these receptacles.

### **The Forum resolved:-**

to inform the Clerk to the Licensing Board of the Forum's support for the bottle receptacles initiative.

## **ENTRY CURFEW - CONSULTATION**

7. The Forum had before it a letter from the Clerk to the Licensing Board advising of a further consultation exercise which will conclude on 15 May, 2009, into the proposed introduction of a 12.30am curfew condition for entry to licensed premises selling alcohol after 1.00am in order to address the licensing objectives of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005.

An extensive range of organisations and individuals have been requested to submit their views as part of the consultation exercise. Jennie Biggs advised that she was drafting a reply on behalf of the JADAT and it is understood Grampian Police will be submitting their own comments. Copies of these replies will be submitted to a future Forum meeting for information.

Sergeant Barry Skinner advised that Grampian Police have changed their views in the light of experience in relation to staggering of closing times of licensed premises and premises with Late Hours Catering Licences and now consider that Late Hours Catering Licences should not be granted beyond 3.00am. The Forum recalled that representations had been unsuccessful in the past trying to encourage premises with Entertainment Licences to stop serving alcohol from a set time and switch to serving soft drinks and food. The Forum recognises the complex interrelationship of factors including availability of taxis and buses which affects the atmosphere in the city centre at the weekends and the level of disorder and offending behaviour. There was some support for a requirement for a charge to be levied to enter entertainment premises as this may encourage customers to remain within the premises particularly if food was served after 10.00pm for example.

The Forum was also conscious of the desire of some staff working in licensed premises to have sufficient time to enter places of entertainment when they have completed their own shifts. The Forum awaits with interest the outcomes of the experience of implementation of the curfew given the feedback that curfews elsewhere in Scotland were unsuccessful.

**The Forum resolved:-**

to inform the Clerk to the Licensing Board that the Forum agrees that a curfew is desirable but does not wish to take a collective view on the appropriate timing of the curfew but has encouraged individual members of the Forum to return the feedback form by the deadline of 15 May, 2009. It was agreed to support Grampian Police in their request to the Licensing Committee that they no longer grant Late Hours Catering Licences beyond 3.00am.

**UNIGHT SCHEME**

8. PC Fiona Duncan of Grampian Police advised the Forum of very successful preparatory work to launch a Unight Scheme in Aberdeen based on the successful model in operation in Edinburgh. Twenty licensed premises have indicated they wish to participate and the target is to launch the scheme in mid August to tie in with the University Freshers Week and with the September implementation date of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005. PC Duncan advised of some of the initiatives the Edinburgh scheme has adopted including an educational message about the effect of use of false identification or an older sibling's passport. Passports used in this way are confiscated. Licensed premises in Edinburgh in the Scheme took a voluntary decision to end irresponsible drinks promotions and they have had success in eliminating flyposting.

**The Forum resolved:-**

to congratulate Grampian Police and the licensees on their success in agreeing to launch a Unight Scheme in Aberdeen. Sergeant Skinner advised the Forum that Grampian Police would not be administering the Scheme but he agreed to pass on the Forum's interest in being represented in an observer capacity at a future meeting of the participants in the Scheme.

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM**

9. The Forum noted that feedback is awaited from members of the Forum who agreed to approach interested parties with a view to applying to be members of the Forum. The Forum agreed that it would be useful to have a representative from the door stewards/security industry and a representative from the Unight Scheme as members or observers.

**The Forum resolved:-**

to invite Mr. Bob Westland of Upfront Security to join the Forum and to request a nominee from the Aberdeen Unight Scheme to join the Forum in an observer capacity in due course.

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

10. Sergeant Barry Skinner advised that there had been a reduction in offences for the three months since December, 2008 and that this reflects the seasonal Christmas/New Year peak of offences. He also advised that there is generally a low

recording of licensing offences. Sergeant Skinner advised of relevant statistics including the recording of 82 Assaults, 60 Breaches of the Peace, 67 Thefts and 13 drugs related offences.

Jennie Biggs advised that NHS Grampian had recently appointed a Senior Analyst who will be of assistance in producing statistical information in particular helping improve record keeping at the Accident and Emergency Department at ARI. The JADAT has been keen to have information on admissions/treatments in the Accident and Emergency Department of ARI where alcohol/drugs misuse has been a factor. It is hoped there will be improved information from GP practices relevant to the work of the JADAT and the Licensing Forum. Meantime members of the Forum were asked to note the availability of statistical information on the following website: [www.alcoholinformation.isdscotland.org](http://www.alcoholinformation.isdscotland.org).

**The Forum resolved:-**

to note the statistical information from Grampian Police.

**WORKPLAN**

11. The Forum noted that the Workplan would be updated to reflect decisions at today's meeting.

**JOINT MEETING OF THE FORUM AND THE LICENSING BOARD**

12. The Forum considered the workload commitments of the Licensing Board prior to the implementation of the new Licensing Act in September, 2009 and the timing of the Joint Meeting of the Forum and the Licensing Board.

**The Forum resolved:-**

to invite the Licensing Board to a Joint Meeting with the Forum on Wednesday, 5 August, 2009 at 2.00pm.

**DRAFT ALCOHOL STRATEGY FOR ABERDEEN 2008/2018**

13. Harry Miller advised that at the Alcohol Task Group meeting earlier today it was noted that the Aberdeen Licensing Board has not yet submitted a response on the draft Alcohol Strategy.

**The Forum resolved:-**

to request Councillor Jaffrey, as Convener of the Licensing Board, to request the Board at its meeting on 12 May, 2009 to consider submitting a formal response on the draft Alcohol Strategy for Aberdeen 2008/2018.

## **ATTENDANCE AT LICENSING BOARD MEETINGS**

**14.** Jennie Biggs and Ken Eddie advised that they had attended recent meetings of the Licensing Board and found them informative and interesting. However, they had noted there was a shortage of agendas and faults with the public address system which made it difficult to fully participate in the work of the Board.

Councillor Jaffrey agreed to take these matters up with the Clerk to the Board.

## **GARAGES/PETROL STATIONS**

**15.** Councillor Jaffrey, as Convener of the Aberdeen Licensing Board explained the effect of a Sheriff Principal ruling in respect of renewal of licences to sell alcohol held by operators of garages and petrol station forecourt shops. The Forum noted the Sheriff Principal had not supported the Licensing Board's interpretation of the new Act in this respect.

## **NEXT MEETING**

**16.** It was noted that the next meeting of the Licensing Forum will take place on Thursday, 11 June, 2009 at 2.00pm and that the next meeting of the Licensing Forum Sub-Committee will take place on Thursday, 28 May, 2009 at 5.00pm.

- **ALLAN McINTOSH, Convener.**