

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

20 JANUARY 2016

Present: Councillor S Williams (Chair)

Councillors S Bashir (Minutes 9 to 12), S Bolton, R Martins, and M Mills

Also present: Phillip Holby, Chair of Pubwatch (Minutes 9 to12)
Martin Fox, Front Line Limited (Minutes 9 to12)
Evan Fourie, Door Supervisor (Minutes 9 to12)
John Horastead, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue (Minutes 9 to13)

Officers: Head of Community and Customer Services
Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator
Licensing Enforcement Officer
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (AG)

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Mehta was absent without apologies.

10 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2015 were submitted and signed.

12 WATFORD PUBWATCH

The Chair invited Mr Holby to address the Task Group.

Mr Holby introduced himself and explained that he had become Chair of the Watford Pubwatch approximately 12 months ago and had extensive licensing experience. He informed the Task Group that the festive season had gone very well with no problems experienced in the town. He explained that 'vulnerability training' was being rolled out bar by bar across Watford following he and the local police attending the north east of England last year; where a similar scheme was in place. It was envisaged that this training would make the

environment even safer. He commented that there were excellent communications between Pubwatch and the Council's Licensing Team; with monthly meetings being held. Similarly, liaison with the police Town Centre Team was very good - and there was a positive relationship with the police in general. He concluded by saying that he had nothing negative to report other than some minor concerns about radio responses from the CCTV control room. He asked Mr Fourie to expand on this matter.

Mr Fourie explained that, on occasion, communication from the CCTV control room could be an issue; with CCTV initially introduced to assist monitoring people and to aid communication. Recently, it appeared that some staff were uncertain as to their brief; in that when a licensed premises made a call for police assistance, the staff asked for too much information thereby potentially delaying the police response. However, the scale of coverage of CCTV in the town was excellent and provided a fantastic deterrent; and was good for security. Mr Holby suggested that a way forward may be for a representative from the CCTV control room to attend a Pubwatch meeting or, alternatively, Pubwatch to visit the control room to discuss the matter.

Mr Fox then addressed the Task Group explaining that his company specialised in door supervisors; predominantly around the night time economy, with 400 staff employed nationwide and with contracts with all of the major licensing companies in the country. They had been in Watford for three years and had found the town one of the safest places to work in. There was an excellent police presence; much better than in some other locations. In fact, best practice had recently been shared with the London Borough of Uxbridge with regard to Watford being a safe place. He concluded by outlining procedures at the Oceana night club.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

In response to a question from Councillor Mills, Mr Holby explained that Pubwatch meetings were held on the first Wednesday of every month, at varying locations, commencing at 3pm; and that he could arrange attendance following suitable requests.

Councillor Bolton asked whether the Scan Net system was optional or mandatory for licensed premises. Mr Holby explained that this depended on the particular premises licence and could be either. However, all of the main premises in the town used the system. The Head of Community and Customer Services briefly outlined the history of Scan Net's introduction in the town explaining that it was used widely preventing potential problematical patrons playing one premises off against another.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr Holby confirmed that the Scan Net system was not used at quiet times; these were predominantly during the day when no door staff were employed. However, it was always available at busy times or when specific intelligence was received from the police; such as in relation to football matches.

Councillor Martins commented that he was pleased that Watford had a safe night time economy as this had not always been the case. He was encouraged by the effective partnerships in the town. He asked, in relation to Scan Net, whether information was maintained about problems with licensed premises that did not use the system. The Licensing Enforcement Officer explained that the police brought crime figures to the monthly Pubwatch meetings where any issues with a particular premises would be highlighted. If the premises did not have Scan Net, the matter would be addressed. There were no issues with any premises at present. Councillor Martins suggested that any weak link would devalue the system as a whole. The Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator explained that where a premises was a problem, having Scan Net could be made a condition of the premises licence.

Councillor Martins commented that he was disappointed about the communication issue relating to the CCTV control room and asked whether this was something the Task Group could take forward. The Head of Community and Customer Services undertook to progress the matter (with Mr Holby reassuring the Task Group that it was not a major issue).

ACTION – Head of Community and Customer Services

Councillor Martins said that it was apparent that Pubwatch had a good relationship operationally with the Council and wondered whether working with the community would be something it could consider. Mr Holby explained that whilst there were no specific community projects at present; some premises provided funding towards taxi marshalling schemes for example. Pubwatch was slightly separate as an entity as it did not receive any funding. However, should funding become available it was a matter that could be explored. He outlined a number of other initiatives undertaken by particular licensed premises. The Head of Community and Customer Services added that the strong relationship with licensed premises had assisted in gaining the Purple Flag award for the town and in the success around Best Bar None.

Councillor Bolton referred to the day time economy and asked whether Watford Football Club, being promoted to the Premiership, had had any impact on licensed premises. Mr Holby explained that the number of patrons had increased on match days and it had been particularly busy on the day Watford were promoted; but all went very well. There had not been any significant problems this year; and an issue with Tottenham Hotspur fans on one occasion had been successfully resolved. Overall, there had been no increase in trouble and there were now better communications around intelligence with the police. In fact, the police talked to as many premises as was possible with very good systems in place.

Councillor Bolton asked whether Watford night club venues had publicity about large scale visits by males. Mr Fourie explained that they did not but more care was taken when larger numbers were attending.

The Chair made reference to the jubilant behaviour that surrounded Watford Football Club's promotion to the Premiership. He asked, with regard to the

improvements in the night club infrastructure of late, whether more door staff or other support was needed. He also asked, with regard to taxis, how steps were taken to ensure patrons got in to marked vehicles and whether there were any issues in reference to this matter.

Mr Holby explained that there may be a need for more door supervisors but this had to be balanced against the closure of some premises; so the situation may level out. He added that as new premises tended to be of a higher standard this would give a lift to the town. However, there had not been a massive influx of people but there was a potential that further support may be needed in the future. With regard to taxis, Mr Holby explained that this was a concern and the vulnerability training previously referred to focused on young females; to help ensure they got home safely. He added that door staff were trained to take vehicle registration numbers where appropriate and that some premises paid towards taxi marshalling schemes. However, the pedestrianisation of the town centre meant there was limited influence on taxis but premises did point patrons in the right direction to get appropriate transport. He suggested that some taxi rates appeared excessive and that this was something that perhaps should be looked in to.

The Chair thanked Mr Holby, Mr Fox and Mr Fourie for their contributions to the Task Group.

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HERTFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE

Mr Horastead introduced a presentation on how Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue worked with young people and with local communities. The presentation included information on:

Young people

- The Life project
- Working with the Prince's Trust
- The Fire Cadets
- The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
- Box Cleva
- Local youth groups and local schools
- Youth Connexions
- Fire station open days
- Work experience
- West Hert's College

Community Engagement

- Safer Streets
- Private landlords
- Temporary accommodation
- Accommodation above shops
- Beds in sheds
- Safe Start young parents

- Side by side
- Caring together
- Mencap
- Driving home for Christmas

At the conclusion of the presentation the Chair asked if there were any questions.

Councillor Bolton commented that having a large amount of initiatives was brilliant and it was good that children would see such credible role models. He asked whether 'Box Clewa' was part funded by Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue. Mr Horastead explained that this was part funded by the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and part funded as a charity. Also, sponsorship was being sought. He added that the CSP funding was ring fenced for four years.

In response to a question from Councillor Mills about accommodation above shops; Mr Horastead outlined a recent prosecution relating to five workers sleeping above a premises that had resulted in £32K of fines. However, accommodating individuals above shops could be acceptable if the property was configured satisfactorily. In the case of the design of new premises, the problems were often resolved. Councillor Mills gave an example of a possible problem at a shop in Whippendell Road. The Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator undertook to look in to the issue.

ACTION – Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator

Councillor Martins made reference to 'Box Clewa' commenting that the District and County Councils may have funds that might be able to assist. Mr Horastead thanked Councillor Martins for his suggestion.

Councillor Martins asked whether assistance was provided to vulnerable elderly groups. Mr Horastead explained that Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue liaised with Age Concern and other relevant organisations. He said that the categories most at risk were those aged 55 and over who lived alone (and also those aged up to 13 years). He added that steps were taken to protect the 'asset rich but cash poor' category of the elderly through the CSP; as these could be vulnerable.

Councillor Mills asked whether Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue worked with resident's associations. Mr Horastead explained that they did - including 'Residents of the Third Age' for example. He added that they also worked with churches.

The Chair asked whether the changes to legislation in relation to private landlords might cause problems in Watford. Mr Horastead explained that the issue would be monitored through 'One Watford'. However, major problems were not envisaged.

The Head of Community and Customer Services commented that there were excellent working relationships between Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue and the

Council's Community Safety and Environmental Health departments. Mr Horastead concurred with this sentiment.

The Chair thanked Mr Horastead for his presentation to the Task Group.

14 **ACTIONS AND QUESTIONS UPDATE**

The Task Group received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer updating Members on outstanding actions from previous meetings.

It was agreed that the actions could be signed off.

RESOLVED –

that the update report be noted and all of the actions be signed off.

Chair

Community Safety Partnership Task Group

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm
and finished at 7.30 pm