



**Report to: Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Report of: Corporate Director – Operations, Homes & Communities**

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**Subject: MANAGING THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY WITHIN WORCESTER CITY CENTRE**

**1. Recommendation**

**That Committee:**

- 1.1 Notes the contents of the report and in particular, the existing multi-agency work being undertaken in respect of the night-time economy**
- 1.2 Notes the further work that is intended to be carried out in respect of the feasibility of submitting an application for Purple Flag Status, and to report back to this Committee in Summer 2022**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The term 'night-time economy' is used to describe a wide range of activities from a trip to the theatre or a family meal to a night out at a club. Night-time economies are an important part of our towns and cities and are estimated to bring in over £60 billion to the UK economy every year.
- 2.2 The vast majority of people enjoy a night out safely and sensibly. However, the night-time economy can be associated with issues, predominantly around alcohol fuelled violence and crime and anti-social behaviour which often result in negative perceptions.
- 2.3 At Council in November 2019 a Motion was proposed in respect of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers' 'Freedom from Fear' Campaign. The Motion was subsequently approved and stated that *'Every minute of the working day a shop worker is verbally abused, threatened with violence or physically attacked. Council therefore supports the USDAW Freedom from Fear Campaign and requests that all Worcester residents respect shop workers. Council requests the Managing Director to work with Worcester BID, West Mercia Constabulary and Community Safety teams to develop a strategy to reduce shop worker abuse'*.
- 2.4 More recently this Committee has on multiple occasions debated the safety of the night-time economy and following its last meeting the Chair of the Committee requested officers to develop a report on the subject.
- 2.5 This report intends to update Members on the current and proposed work being carried out by the Council in partnership with key agencies to ensure that the City Centre is safe and well managed for those who use or work the night-time economy.

- 2.6 In order to provide some perspective on how safe the City Centre of Worcester is data from Worcestershire Regulatory Services and West Mercia Police has been drawn upon.
- 2.7 This Committee during 2020 approved a change to the Cumulative Impact Area within the City Centre, reducing its footprint and focussing on certain types of licensed premises that contributed to many licensing related issues. The assessment that led to this decision showed that alcohol related crime between 2016 and 2019 had year on year reduced within the CIA. The peak days for incidents are Friday through to Sunday, with peak times being between 23:00hrs and 05:00hrs.
- 2.8 WRS Strategic Assessment 2019/2020 confirmed that between the period 2016/2017 – 2018/2019 63% of the total complaints (299) received across the County about licensed premises related to noise complaints compared to 30% relating to crime & disorder. Two thirds of complaints were linked to pubs & clubs with 15% being linked to restaurants and take-aways.
- 2.9 In respect of Worcester City, 64 complaints were received during 2016/2017 – 2018/2019 from just over 400 licensed premises, the rate of complaint being 15.92 per 100 licensed premises. This compares to 13.28 per 100 licensed premises across the County. The highest rate was Redditch at 16.28/100 licensed premises and the lowest was Wychavon at 7.58/100 licensed premises.
- 2.10 2020 onwards has of course been skewed by 3 prolonged periods of national lockdown so a more recent evaluation of data would have limited value. The information above however does not suggest that the night-time economy in Worcester City is of particular concern, although it is reflective of a City Centre that has a density of licensed premises that is enjoyed by many particularly at weekends. A 2020/2021 Strategic Assessment is currently being finalised by WRS.
- 2.11 The focus of this report is those who use the night-time economy as well as those who work within it. With both groups there is a very clear responsibility on employers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of employees, and to ensure that employees and others are kept safe. This includes an obligation to ensure any potential risk of work-related violence is eliminated or controlled.
- 2.12 Furthermore, the Licensing Act 2003 conditions each and every licensed premise with a range of conditions relating to the 4 licensing principles. The responsible person must ensure that all licensing conditions are complied with.
- 2.13 The primary role of the Local Authority is that of regulator to step in where issues are found during a proactive inspection, following a complaint or accident notification being received or where a formal license review is called for.

### **3. Key Issues**

- 3.1 There are a number of existing forums and multi-agency meetings which cover either specific aspects of crime or have a responsibility for overseeing the response to criminality for the business economy. The two main groups are Safer Worcester Partnership (which has Member attendance) and South Worcestershire Serious Organised Crime Joint Action Group (SOCJAG).

- 3.2 The Safer Worcester Partnership has meets 5 times a year and receives reports and co-ordinates joint projects on issues that include business and the night-time economy relating to the business economy including:
- 3.3 **Worcester Business Improvement District (BID)** has been in operation since April 2010 and is a non-for-profit organisation with the aim of improving the trading conditions for the businesses who contribute a BID levy. Worcester BID works hard to ensure that there is a welcoming presence for Worcester’s residents and visitors in the city centre, and to combat anti-social behaviour, theft and other incidents of crime throughout the day and night.
- 3.4 One of its priorities is managing city safety initiatives including the delivery of a local strategy to reduce city centre crime and the fear of crime, and to help businesses to trade successfully in a safe and secure environment.
- 3.5 Worcester BID also contribute to the Safer Worcester Partnership and lead on projects such as **CityNet**, **Best Bar None** and **Ask for Angela**.
- 3.6 Worcester CityNet is Worcester BID’s Business Crime Reduction Partnership and includes members from over 150 businesses from across the day and night-time economies. It is an intelligence led approach to managing city centre crime issues, by targeting and focusing efforts on the most persistent offenders.
- 3.7 In addition to live radio communication there is an online sharing information system. It has 162 members and during 2021 has reported 106 instances.
- 3.8 Best Bar None is an accreditation scheme supported by the Home Office and drinks industry that aims to improve standards in the evening and night-time economy. Through a combination of responsible management and operation of licensed premises, ongoing improvements, and social responsibility, Best Bar None’s goal is to help provide a safer night out to all. The following businesses in Worcester are Best Bar None accredited:

<b>All Bar One</b>	<b>Cote Brasserie</b>	<b>The Crown</b>
<b>Mode Sports Bar</b>	<b>The Postal Order</b>	<b>Royal Porcelain Works</b>
<b>Slug &amp; Lettuce</b>	<b>Tonic Bar</b>	<b>Tramps Nightclub</b>
<b>Velvet Lounge</b>		

- 3.9 ‘Ask for Angela’ was first promoted by Worcester BID in September 2019 as part of the University of Worcester’s Freshers’ Week and is a discreet codeword that a customer can use when they feel unsafe or threatened.
- 3.10 The aim is that an employer makes its staff members aware of the campaign and if presented with such a situation the staff member will then take appropriate action to ensure the customer’s safety. For instance, these actions could be escorting the customer safely out of the premises or calling a taxi.
- 3.11 It is intended to work with Worcester BID during 2022 to look at a relaunch of Best Bar None and Ask for Angela to encourage further participation and uptake.
- 3.12 Over the last 18 months West Mercia Police have reviewed how the night-time economy in Worcester City Centre is policed, this is in line with changes in the demand for Police, changing Police styles and implementing a more problem solving approach.

- 3.13 Since February 2020 designated officers have covered the City Centre during the core night-time hours of 10pm until 5am. These officers are given specific tasks to complete, including licence checks on premises that have late night refreshment licences or alcohol licences.
- 3.14 Officers seek to educate licensed premises and the Police Licensing Officer is working with establishments to try to reduce demand while making the City a safe place to visit and work in. There is a greater emphasis on signposting those that are homeless and dealing proactively with aggressive begging. The Police will be working with Worcestershire Regulatory Services and licensed taxi drivers to improve use of the taxi ranks in the City Centre.
- 3.15 Mobile patrols are of course additionally conducted at peak times on foot with additional resource standing-by for proactive policing of events or if required by way of emergency response.
- 3.16 Worcester Street Pastors are uniformed volunteers from numerous local churches who are trained to patrol Worcester City centre on a Saturday night from 10pm until 4am on Sunday morning 50 weekends out of 52 each year.
- 3.17 They provide support to people who become vulnerable during their evening out, ensuring their safety and wellbeing. They are resourced to provide suitable footwear, water, thermal blankets and arrange transport home.
- 3.18 They provide early intervention to those heavily intoxicated through drug and alcohol use, and through carefully assessing each person's circumstances their aim is to prevent or reduce any serious risk of injury and harm to themselves or those nearby. On establishing whether a person's health and safety is at immediate risk they commit to either waiting with them whilst they recover, reacquainting the individual with friends and members of their original party, or when necessary, request the assistance of the appropriate emergency service. Street Pastors also carry a first-aid kit to administer basic first aid to those in need.
- 3.19 Worcester City also operates a Safe Place Scheme administered by Our Way Self Advocacy. The scheme gives vulnerable people a short term 'Safe Place' to go if they are feeling threatened or upset when out and about in their local town. Shops, businesses and public buildings who are a Safe Place will display the Safe Place sticker in their window. People can carry a Safe Places Card that will include the individual's name and emergency telephone numbers for the Safe Place staff to call if they require more help. Businesses that are registered as Safe Places include –

<b>Barbourne Ex Servicemens' Club</b>	<b>Brewers Arms</b>	<b>Caffe Nero (Broad St)</b>	<b>Café Nero (The Shambles)</b>
<b>Chocolate Deli</b>	<b>Clockwatchers Cafe</b>	<b>Costa Coffee (High Street)</b>	<b>The Guildhall</b>
<b>The Hive</b>	<b>Kitsons Pharmacy</b>	<b>Marks &amp; Spencer</b>	<b>Poppins</b>
<b>The Postal Order</b>	<b>Revital Health Shop</b>	<b>St Johns Library</b>	<b>Tourist Information Centre</b>
<b>Victim Support</b>	<b>Wildgoose Rural Training Centre</b>	<b>Ye Olde Talbot Hotel</b>	<b>Worcester Warriors</b>

- 3.20 Worcester City Centre has two **Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)** that cover its geography that sit amongst a broad range of powers and tools to help tackle anti-social behaviour locally. These are the PSPO for Alcohol Control and the City Centre PSPO that includes Intentional Feeding of Gulls, Dangerous Cycling & Skateboarding and Aggressive Begging.
- 3.21 As well as providing the Council with powers to tackle breaches of the PSPO the aim of such PSPO's is to provide residents and visitors with confidence that deterrents are in place for such ASB making it a safe place to spend time in.
- 3.22 During financial year 2020-2021 Worcester City Council completed the upgrade works to its street **CCTV surveillance system**. In addition, the Council used Police & Crime Commissioner funding of £25,240 to upgrade and repair infrastructure supporting the cameras. The street CCTV control room is located in Wychavon District Council Civic Centre in Pershore and monitored 24/7 by Wychavon DC employees. The surveillance officers are able to communicate with local businesses, police and other CCTV control rooms in Crowngate and University via CityNet radio.
- 3.23 South Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership has been awarded £511,960 of **Safer Streets Funding** by the Home Office to deliver targeted work to reduce violence against women and girls.
- 3.24 The project will deliver on the following projects by March 2022:
- Improved alleyway lighting and CCTV surveillance
  - Landscaping improvements to Cripplegate Park
  - Taxi Marshals
  - Paint Festival to include alleyways
  - West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre will be providing education and awareness training for night-time economy staff and delivering school workshops to students on positive relationships and reporting abuse.
- 3.25 As reported previously to this Committee Worcester will host the **Knife Angel** (national monument against violence and aggression) during March 2022 and will use the opportunity to raise awareness of the impact of violence and aggression on communities.
- 3.26 Whilst in situ there will be a series of workshops within the cathedral, school visits, classroom activities and interactive events at the statue. Night time economy staff will be included with training provided and invited to take part in the events and activities.
- 3.27 Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) provide the operational Environmental Health & Licensing Service on behalf of Worcester City Council and have recently introduced a **Night-Time Economy Team (NTE Team)** predominantly set up to look at enforcement and compliance on weekend evenings between 6pm - 1am across the County, and occasional operations until 4am. The districts they visit are determined by several factors and information including:
- Intelligence from both the WRS intelligence team and Public Health
  - Complaints received into WRS and Worcester City Council

- Police Briefing issues highlighted
- Proactive licensing enforcement (suspended licences/taxi related work)
- Covid Intelligence
- Tactical Assessments

- 3.28 Between July and November the NTE Team have visited 80 businesses with almost 50 outcomes achieved via a range of informal and formal action.
- 3.29 WRS core business involves **Environmental Health & Licensing Practitioners undertaking a range of inspections and assessment covering Health & Safety, Food Safety and Licensing.**
- 3.30 Environmental Health officers based within the health and safety team regularly visit Worcester’s businesses in order to advise and assess their various work practices. Officers regularly undertake pro-active out of hours inspection work in the evening and at weekends to check on whether businesses are operating safely and in line with their relevant risk assessments
- 3.31 The safety of the various business employees is key and therefore WRS officers always ensure that appropriate training and relevant safeguards are in place, in turn making sure that any employees working in Worcester’s businesses are following official health and safety guidelines and regulations. There is a lot of good business practice in place, but where a business is seen to be failing, officers will intervene in an effort to ensure that the business standard and working practices improve. Where a business chooses not to engage or is being managed badly, formal action is often the only appropriate course of action.
- 3.32 In March 2020 this Committee approved an amended **Cumulative Impact Policy** that focussed on a smaller area of the City Centre and two types of licensed activity, vertical drinking establishments and late night refreshment between the hours of midnight and 05:00hrs.
- 3.33 This provides the business community with a clear message about the type of businesses that the council may find problematic in terms of growth whilst, at the same time, indicating a willingness to positively consider applications that do not fall within this definition. This intends to send the message that the City wishes to see diverse development in its night-time economy offer, so that those businesses operating to earlier terminal hours or those that have alcohol as part of a broader offer would be a welcome addition to the city-scape.
- 3.34 In previous years the Council along with other key agencies including Worcester BID and West Mercia Police have been involved in discussions around an aspiration to apply for Purple Flag status. Purple Flag is an international accreditation programme that aims to reward those who achieve innovation, curation, planning and partnership to create a destination that can delight users after dark. Purple Flag strives to help create safe and thriving locations at night for all users.
- 3.35 The accreditation process takes towns and cities through a comprehensive set of standards, management processes and good practice examples all designed to help transform the night-time economy and provide a research, training and development programme which will:

- 1) Raise the profile and improve the public image of the City Centre

- 2) Encourage a wider patronage and increase expenditure
- 3) Lower crime and anti-social behaviour
- 4) Provide a more successful mixed-use economy in the longer term

- 3.36 It is intended to pick up these conversations during early 2022 with a view to revisiting the Purple Flag Application process and assessing how feasible it would be for Worcester City to submit a bid having regard to the criteria set out. A further report on this subject will be presented to Committee in Summer 2022 by way of an update.
- 3.37 The report sets out both the depth and breadth of multi-agency work being driven by the Council's Community Safety Team including with West Mercia Police and Worcester BID, in respect of managing the night-time economy of the City that is being overseen by a range of groups both strategic and operational.
- 3.38 Many of the building blocks are already in place to ensure our City Centre continues to be both an attractive and safe destination for people to socialise and work, whilst also acknowledging that the previous twenty months has significantly impacted the hospitality and entertainment trade. Therefore, a balance needs to be maintained to ensure our City Centre businesses can return to operating successfully without over regulation or scrutiny where it is not required.

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**Background Papers:** N/A