

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

UNDER AGE SALES

Officers of the Public Protection Service are continuing to work with the police in carrying out under age sales operations, where young volunteers are directed to attempt to test-purchase age restricted goods.

The focus of recent alcohol test-purchasing operations has recently shifted to on-licensed premises, and results have been poor – half the attempts made recently at on-licensed premises resulted in a sale taking place, compared with 10% at off-licensed premises. Test purchasing operations will continue to ensure pressure on both the on- and off-licensed trade is maintained.

The Service has also been working in conjunction with Trading Standards North West to undertake cigarette test purchasing, and three reports relating to the under age sale of cigarettes are currently being processed.

FIREWORKS ENFORCEMENT

Officers of the Public Protection Service carried out enforcement visits to all retailers registered to sell fireworks over the Bonfire Night period. Firework storage conditions were checked at all premises and it is pleasing to note that no significant problems were encountered. Officers also worked with the police to raid a private house which was allegedly supplying fireworks to children; this operation resulted in a number of fireworks being seized to prevent further sales being made.

LICENSING

Pre-Christmas Ply for hire operation

At weekends in the run up to Christmas Public protection enforcement officers worked with the Safer Travel Unit to tackle private hire drivers engaged in plying for hire. It is unlawful for private hire drivers to pick up a fare on the street. The journey must be pre-booked with the driver's operator. Insurance is invalid where the correct booking procedure is not followed.

Licensing counter appointment system

In a bid to provide a more efficient and customer focussed service a pilot appointment system is being run at the town hall licensing counter.

NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEARNING

Community Asset Transfer training - further to the decision to enable some of the Borough's community centres to be managed in the future by community associations as voluntary management boards, the Neighbourhoods and Learning service have been working closely with the

groups to develop a programme of skills building that will support them in this process. Elements of the capacity building course involve subjects such as governance, building operations, safe practices, health and safety and managing volunteers. Courses are scheduled to begin from week commencing 10th January 2011.

Work Clubs - the Neighbourhoods and Learning service have been working in partnership with Jobcentreplus and 'Workroutes' colleagues to develop and deliver work clubs across the Borough. Over the last three months, the clubs have provided informal, drop-in sessions for unemployed people to share their experiences and provide support to one another.

Adult Enterprise Week December 2010- At the end of last year, staff from the Neighbourhoods and Learning service worked with partners to organise and deliver an Adult Enterprise Week for people across the Borough who are looking to learn about and develop the skills they need to start up their own enterprise and implement innovation. Despite the inclement weather conditions, the week was a great success, with participants enthusiastically rising to 'Apprentice' style tasks of planning, developing and selling their business ideas.

'Be Fair, Let's Care' project - the Neighbourhoods and Learning service recently secured funding worth £25,000 to implement a community development offer that will support community associations and groups to build their skills around assessing and delivering social care needs within their communities. The project focuses on strengthening social capital within groups that are well placed to deliver positive outcomes for the most vulnerable members within their communities.

'Don't be afraid...to ask' project - Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) funding has enabled the Neighbourhoods and Learning service to continue work with partners to build on the achievements of the 'Discover Mosque' project. At a time when recession and public spending cuts may increase the strain on community relations, the 'Don't be afraid...to ask' project offers an opportunity for young people, their families and communities to come together to explore cohesion issues. The project will work with local schools across the Borough to host cohesion conferences and workshops within schools with the Borough's Schools' Cohesion Officer and Police Cohesion Team acting as school mentors.

'Community Reach' project - Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) funding has also enabled the development of this project within the Neighbourhoods and Learning service. The purpose of this project is to explore the factors that facilitate interest and involvement in extremism and to ascertain how these contribute to extremist attitudes. Fifteen young adults, male and female from across the Borough, will be supported to look at alternative forms of responses, identifying ways in which marginalised young people can be positively engaged in developing solutions to prevent extremism and disseminating these amongst their peers.