

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

**Agenda  
Item No.**

**Report of Corporate Director for  
People**

**to**

**Cabinet**

**on**

**17<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

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Drug and Alcohol Commissioning Team

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## **Drugs, Alcohol and Problem Gambling Strategy**

**People Scrutiny Committee**

**Executive Councillor: Councillor David Norman**

**A Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)**

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide information about the development of the Drugs, Alcohol and Problem Gambling Strategy and to seek endorsement for the proposed arrangements for its further development and implementation.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees that the strategy is conditionally endorsed, with wider consultation and further development to follow.
- 2.2 That agreement is given to the development of an implementation group as part of the joint commissioning arrangements with the CCG to oversee the final development of the strategy and its implementation.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Up to until 2013 drug treatment strategies were annual requirements of the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA) which granted Southend-on-Sea Borough Council the Pooled Treatment Budget with which local drug treatment services were commissioned. However, along with the health reforms which transferred Public Health and all of the commissioning responsibilities for specialist alcohol and drugs treatment, education and prevention for all age groups to local authorities, came the removal of the NTA requirements and any formal strategic planning requirements.
- 3.2 In the period since April 2013, considerable time investment has been made in assimilating inherited commissioning arrangements into local authority programmes, and ensuring these are fit for purpose and consistent with local need. This work has largely been led by the Drug and Alcohol Commissioning Team and has been overseen by the Community Safety Priority Leadership

Group. However, many other aspects of Council business have been involved within this work, along with significant input from health, criminal justice, business and voluntary sector partners. Examples of this work include the Purple Flag partnership and its further development of a safe night time economy in Southend; the Home Office supported Local Alcohol Action Area programme; and the redeveloping of adult drug treatment services.

- 3.3 Whilst there is no mandatory requirement that Local Authorities and their partners develop drugs and alcohol strategies through which to organise commissioning and operational programmes, many do. However, very few local authorities are known to have developed strategies through which to begin to tackle the negative impacts of problem gambling within their communities. As these issues collectively and individually impact so widely in our community and upon the business and public and voluntary services working across Southend, it was requested that this strategy be prepared.
- 3.4 In preparing this draft the guidance from several internal and external stakeholders has been that it needs to be short and readable, and that the emphasis should be on the actions it proposes and which the associated implementation will drive forwards. In this regard it was determined that the document would dispense with referencing and with lots of data. This data is available elsewhere, both in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments documents, as well as within other local research and performance reports. A fully referenced version could readily be prepared should this be required.
- 3.5 It was also recommended that objectives only be developed upon which local partners are likely to be able to exert sufficient influence to be successful. There are a number of examples of strategic approaches which have been found by researchers to be effective in reducing harm but which would require national policy changes. An example of this would be the implementation of minimum unit prices for alcohol sales. Any such objectives have not been included within the scope of this document.
- 3.6 It is recommended that the strategy be progressed under the direction of an implementation group, led by the Drug and Alcohol Commissioning Team and reporting to the Community Safety Priority Leadership Group and Health and Wellbeing Boards. At this stage the strategy has not been presented elsewhere and has not been subject to consultation. Further consultation is necessary both to ensure against the current format not having overlooked any key requirements, as well as ensuring buy in to both the overall strategic direction along with the key actions it contains and to which many departments and partners will be required to contribute.
- 3.7 There is concern relating to the capacity of all parties to contribute to the extent which the current version of the action plan requires, and a belief that the oversight of the proposed implementation group and consultee feedback would substantially enhance the reliability of the strategic plan. Further work is required on the action plan to specify outcomes, timescales and accountability. It is proposed that, in order to be responsive to evolving needs and organisational requirements, the strategy is progressed via annual action plans to be developed cyclically.

#### **4. Other Options**

- 4.1 There is no mandatory requirement to have strategic plans for either alcohol, drugs or problem gambling and thus the option of not having a strategy for this area of work remains an option.

#### **5. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 5.1 It is believed that by developing both this strategic approach and, more importantly, the arrangements through which to drive its implementation, that more effective commissioning of prevention, treatment and enforcement activity is viable. These improvements will arise both from the elimination of duplication, as well as enhanced understanding of need and opportunities for better aligning delivery with earlier opportunities for intervention. This is found elsewhere to be effective in meeting many peoples' needs before they become entrenched within destructive drug, alcohol and gambling dependencies requiring costly treatment, criminal justice and social care support. These arrangements have the potential to deliver better care to more people within existing budgets.

#### **6. Corporate Implications**

- 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

This strategy contributes to the Council's vision of developing a healthier and safer Borough characterized with more effective resource utilisation.

- 6.2 Financial Implications

Commissioning of specialist treatment services would remain within Southend Borough Council, managed by the Drug and Alcohol Commissioning Team. The current budget for this aspect of specialist commissioning is a little over £3m. As the programme develops the implementation group will seek to align this and other budgets where this is deemed beneficial to the delivery of agreed objectives, and to eliminate duplication of human and financial resource. A full analysis of all associated spend has not been possible within the development of this document thus far, but it is known that a high percentage of dependent drinkers and drug users receive costly health, social care, criminal justice and housing support. Current spend is being mapped across a cohort of clients in order to better understand the potential costs savings associated with different intervention models. These findings will inform future commissioning approaches.

- 6.3 Legal Implications

None.

- 6.4 People Implications

None.

## 6.5 Property Implications

None

## 6.6 Consultation

A full consultation is required.

## 6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

All services commissioned under this strategy are required to provide support across the breadth of the community. Dedicated women's services, young people services and support for people with multiple needs will be further developed through this programme of work. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be conducted alongside the consultation.

## 6.8 Risk Assessment

All commissioned projects will be fully risk assessed prior to any implementation.

## 6.9 Value for Money

This strategy will develop smarter commissioning approaches both within the Council, and across the broader partnership.

## 6.10 Community Safety Implications

This strategy will enhance community safety and will include many crime reducing projects.

## 6.11 Environmental Impact

The strategy should have a positive effect on some environmental impacts, through reducing drug-related and alcohol related litter, and helping tackle anti-social behaviour such as street drinking.

## 7. Background Papers

None

## 8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Southend-on-Sea Drugs, Alcohol and Problem Gambling Strategy, 2015-2018