

People Scrutiny Committee – 2nd December 2014
Public Questions

Question from Mr Davies to the Executive Councillor for Community Development

Question

“There is a petition being drawn up by residents in cooperation with Harp and local churches to ask Southend supermarkets to put alcohol further to the back of the shop like is now done with cigarettes. The location and promotion of alcohol is too in the face of many recovering or recovered alcoholics and young people under pressure to consume and abuse alcohol. Clearly they want to sell as much as possible but I think at Christmas, they go too far.

Does the portfolio holder support residents in this initiative given the significant health implications?”

Answer

There is a wide body of evidence suggesting that price, promotion and availability of alcohol are key factors influencing alcohol consumption at a population level.

There is a difference between the powers that the Council has to address alcohol promotion and sales and tobacco products. The removal of tobacco products from display in large stores such as supermarkets has been in force since 6th April 2012, as part of the Tobacco Advertising and Promotion (Display) (England) Regulations 2010. There is currently no similar national legislation around alcohol in supermarkets.

Many of the national supermarkets have signed up to several pledges within the National Public Health Responsibility Deal, including pledges around alcohol labelling, alcohol unit awareness / reduction, tackling under-age alcohol sales, and advertising and marketing. At present none of the pledges include actions to remove alcohol from the front of supermarkets. Locally we have held some discussion with the national licensing lead of one of the supermarkets on this point.

Locally, our Regulatory Services team ensure that all on and off-trade businesses comply with the Licensing Act 2003, the licensing objectives are:

- (1) The prevention of crime and disorder
- (2) Public safety
- (3) The prevention of public nuisance
- (4) The protection of children from harm

Southend was also successful in being selected as a Local Alcohol Action Area, and is working closely with the Home Office and Public Health England on a variety of programmes to reduce alcohol related harm. For example, we currently have two off-licences in the borough who have voluntarily stopped selling cheap, high strength beers, lagers and cider. In the New Year we are planning to further expand this voluntary scheme with off - licences in partnership with Essex Police. This scheme forms part of a wider business engagement initiative for health and wellbeing known as the Southend Public Health Responsibility Deal.