

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda  
Item No.

Report of Executive Director (N+E)

To

Cabinet

On

3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020

Report prepared by Simon Ford, Head of Community Safety

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## The Council's response to Alcohol Free Zones in Old Leigh

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s):** Policy and Resources  
**Cabinet Member (Community Safety):** Councillor Martin Terry

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### 1. Purpose of Report

To provide a response to the Petition submitted by Mr Peter Sverdloff proposing alcohol free zones in Old Leigh (approximately 1000 signatures received).

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to undertake a full Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) consultation process which includes stakeholder and public consultation as well as collation of crime and anti-social behaviour evidence, to inform a decision regarding a potential PSPO for Old Leigh in relation to no drinking of alcohol in public areas (excluding licensed premises), and other relevant anti-social behaviour issues in this area.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The *No Drinking Zones* have been replaced by new legislation under the revised Anti-Social Behaviour Act (**Public Space Protection Orders – PSPO's**).
- 3.2 Leigh has long been a magnet for tourism and each year many visitors flock to the area for its historic character, views and natural life and of course its festivals. Consequent upon this has been, year on year, an increase in the amount of alcohol available from the various venues and the propensity for this to be taken into the public realm areas of the Old Town.
- 3.3 Since the Covid 19 pandemic took hold in early 2020, we have seen further significant increases in Anti- Social Behaviour (ASB) across the whole Borough. Old Leigh has been no exception to this with increasing demands placed on the Council's Community Safety Unit, Foreshore officers and Essex Police to respond to public space drinking, large gatherings of youths, noisy mopeds, motorbikes

and vehicles, alongside general ASB activity, such as tombstoning, interference with the fishing businesses and general disruption. The particularly dry and warm summer certainly enhanced the footfall and the incidents that were being reported.

- 3.4** Additional funding had been made available to support Community Safety during the summer season to ensure this increased level of anti-social behaviour was properly responded to. The resources have enabled an enhanced officer presence in Old Leigh, as well as other necessary parts of the borough.
- 3.5** Any additional measures introduced for Old Leigh would be supported by the planned installation of CCTV cameras at key places in Old Leigh, as part of the current CCTV upgrade programme.
- 3.6** It is important to understand that when a PSPO is introduced, there is an expectation regarding enforcement of its provisions. In determining whether to introduce a PSPO for Old Leigh, the Council should consider the resources required to effectively enforce the provisions of any new PSPO, which could include consideration of identifying a suitable office site in Old Leigh which acts similar to the Jubilee Beach Office on central Southend seafront by which various operational partners (community safety, pier and foreshore, police) work from the site during high season offering a more permanent visible presence. There is an opportunity for such a placement in the newly renovated building in the Leigh Library Gardens.
- 3.7** Undertaking a PSPO is a lengthy process requiring significant consultation with trade, partners and members of the public. A PSPO submission requires a strong evidence base of ASB problems – so crime and ASB data from a range of partner organisations would need to be analysed. Any final PSPO would need to comply with the statutory requirements and Government guidance.
- 3.8** The proposed area to be considered in a PSPO for Old Leigh would include the old town (High Street) and the various access routes to the old town, including the Cinder Path from Chalkwell Station, Cockle Row from Leigh Station and other access routes from the north of the old town. Appendix 1 contains a map of the proposed PSPO area.
- 3.9** At certain times during the year, specific events are held in Old Leigh which can include a licence to supply alcohol on public land. It is intended that any such approved event site is exempt from the requirements of the PSPO in relation to drinking alcohol in the public realm.
- 3.10** For the future, consideration may also be given to Leigh (including Old Leigh) as a potential Purple Flag site. The Purple Flag is the national award given for a safe and prosperous night-time economy. Southend town centre has maintained the Purple Flag award for a number of years, and introducing this in Leigh, which is enjoying a growing night-time visitor experience, could help to focus on a safe night time economy.

## 4. Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 As a specific location, Old Leigh is a popular visitor area, with a number of public houses, cafes and restaurants, as well as the picturesque harbour front and wharves, and its renowned local seafood industry. Visitor numbers are high and in particular during the past summer season, a growing number of anti-social behaviour issues have been evident, including drinking in public areas, and it could therefore benefit from the introduction of a PSPO.

### 4.3 Options

There are two options to consider for a potential PSPO –

1. Seek to extend / add to the existing Southend town centre and seafront PSPO to include Old Leigh area.

2. Secure a stand-alone PSPO specifically for Old Leigh. The Cinder Path which links Chalkwell to Leigh has been the scene of anti-social behaviour over the summer and would benefit from inclusion, as would other access routes to the old town.

Given the discrete and unique location of Old Leigh, it is recommended that a specific PSPO covering Old Leigh is considered.

4.4 Southend town centre and central seafront has been awarded Purple Flag status since 2012. Specific criteria and evidence is required for the award to be given – which includes having an external assessment. Applying for Purple Flag status for Leigh would capture a whole range of matters including crime and disorder. External assessors would need to see that all the Purple Flag elements (**Safety / Movement / Appeal / Place / and Policy**) clearly meet the Purple Flag entry standards. One of the areas that the assessment team would focus on is the *wide range of offers* for all members of the community visiting and residing in Leigh, which would include the late afternoon / night-time offer in Old Leigh.

5.0 **Corporate Implications** - Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map: Safe and Well agenda and activity plan (keeping people safe).

6.0 **Financial Implications** – If a PSPO is introduced, there will be an expectation around enforcement of its provisions, so consideration will need to be given to this, and any associated costs for a fixed location to be used as a multi-agency base in Leigh, as proposed in the report.

7.0 **Legal Implications** – PSPO requires (by law) wide stakeholder consultation including sign off by the courts. If the order is breached an offender is liable for a fine and potential prison sentence if failure to pay fine. SBC already has an internal administration system in place in relation to the existing PSPO for Southend town centre and High Street.

- 8.0 People Implications** – Both PSPO and Purple Flag would require staff resourcing
- 9.0 Property Implications** – Potential site in Old Leigh or Leigh to be the base for frontline teams to support PSPO enforcement (similar to Jubilee Beach Office).
- 10.0 Equalities and Diversity Implications** – Nil.
- 11.0 Risk Assessment** – Not required.
- 12.0 Value for Money** - potential reduction in costs associated with crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.
- 13.0 Community Safety Implications** - Addressed in the report.
- 14.0 Environmental Impact** – none specific.
- 15.0. Background Papers** – none other than the Petition.

APPENDIX 1 – Map of proposed PSPO area.