

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: LEISURE COMMITTEE - 21st SEPTEMBER 1999

SUBJECT: PROBLEM WITH DRUNKS - LEAMINGTON TOWN CENTRE

FROM: HEAD OF LEISURE AND AMENITIES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 At the last Leisure Committee, a Member asked what the current situation was with regard to the small band of drunks that inhabit the centre of Leamington, particularly the Jephson Gardens. Your officers promised to report to the next cycle on the latest initiative.

2. THE INEBRIATES ACT

2.1 Your officers have been working with the Warwickshire Constabulary for some time to try and resolve the situation that centres around a small band of people who are habitually drunk in the town centre. Whilst the members of this group are not generally physically abusive, there is no doubt that they are having an effect on tourism, as witnessed by a letter in one of the local newspapers recently from a lady who had visited from the Banbury area explaining that although she had enjoyed the day, she wouldn't return to Leamington because of the antics of this particular group who had approached her for money and frightened her in the process.

2.2 The alcohol-free zone was an attempt to deal with this group, but in this regard, it has proved to be somewhat ineffective as under the legislation, if a policeman asks the offender to dispose of the drink immediately and that person complies, no offence has been committed. There is no doubt that the legislation has been effective in controlling late night drinking by young people in the town centre, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights and this legislation will also be used to try and control the drinking problem in the parks and town centre.

2.3 Irrespective of this, a new policing policy is planned to be brought into effect during autumn, and briefly, any person convicted of their third offence for drunkenness within a 12 month period will be subject to an application before the Mid Warwickshire Magistrates Court under the Inebriates Act. If they are convicted of being an habitual drunk, the offender may be banned for three years from purchasing drink at any licensed retail outlet. Any person knowingly purchasing on their behalf or licensee who knowingly sells or supplies to such a person will also commit an offence. On conviction, all on and off licences in the relevant area will be supplied with full details of the offender and the area will

initially be defined as the Warwick District Council boundary. Research has identified that there are approximately 12 habitual drunks in Leamington who are at risk of being subject to an application over the next 12 months, although this number could rise over the remaining summer months.

- 2.4 Appendix 'A' gives details of the particular Licensing Act, and in order to be effective, the policy will require the close cooperation of the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Magistrates Court Service, Alcohol Advisory Service, local press, representatives of staff from the 270 on and off licences in the Leamington area and of course officers from Warwick District Council. Running concurrently with the new initiative will be an attempt to get assistance for the people in question to help them to combat their alcohol related problems, but such attendance at clinics and groups will be on a voluntary basis, and past experience proves that this is unlikely to be particularly effective.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The initiative indirectly assists many of the key issues put forward by Warwick District Council, particularly with regard to the community and the environment.

4. ACTION REQUIRED

- 4.1 Members are asked to give their full backing to this new initiative and allow your officers to enter into a partnership with the Warwickshire Constabulary to try and deal with the increasing problem of drunks in the town centre.

Dale G. Best
HEAD OF LEISURE AND AMENITIES

Background Papers: See Appendix 'A'

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Areas in District affected: All Leamington Wards