

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Officer – Regulatory & Regeneration

Corporate Services Committee: 8th September 2021

Subject: Festive Safety Scheme

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report will inform the Committee on the findings of the working group which was set up to investigate the viability of setting up a new safety initiative to replace the previous scheme, Night Zone West (“NZW”).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Committee note the terms of this report, and consider utilising the existing funding allocated to Nightzone west to support Police Scotland to assist in the Divisions Festive Policing Plan for the festive period 2021/2022, and to ask the working group to report to a future meeting of this Committee with an new outline festive plan for the festive period 2022/2023.

3. Background

- 3.1** NZW was a safety initiative designed to increase the confidence in the night time economy by the combined provision of Street Pastors, Taxi Marshals and other components, such as an outreach street team, welfare premises and First Aid, designed to inspire an air of safety in our local town centre of Balloch, Clydebank and Dumbarton during the festive season. In 2016 Scottish Government community funding was cut which unfortunately resulted in no scheme being in place that year. Instead funding was secured from the WDC Licensing budget to offer support to Police Scotland in the delivery of their Festive Policing Plan. Thereafter £12,000 was allocated to the program, with £8,000 of funding being allocated to licensing to procure taxi marshals and the remaining £4,000 being provided to the Communities Team.
- 3.2** Despite involved and repeated efforts of officers there have been great difficulties in finding a contractor able and willing to provide taxi marshals. Other component parts of the scheme have also been difficult to source therefore, a decision was taken by the Licensing Board on 12 March 2019, in conjunction with the Local Licensing Forum that the funding previously allocated to the scheme be offered to Police Scotland to assist the Police festive plan. This funding was not allocated over the festive period in 2020-2021 due to the COVID restrictions placed on licensed premises.

- 3.3** Following a committee decision in 17th February 2021, it was decided to establish a working group to look into future options to replace the Nightzone West scheme.

The full terms of the decision of the Committee was that the:

“Committee agreed to look into different ways of delivering Night Zone West, including use of volunteers and alternative funding sources. As part of their investigation, officers should work with our Community Planning Partners. Committee agreed that a report will come back to Corporate Services as soon as possible after July recess giving members options for the continuation of this valued festive service.”

All security providers contacted in 2021 to invite to tender for the taxi marshal contract have either not responded to the invitation or they have declined to tender.

- 3.4** In relation to the other component parts of the scheme such as volunteers to work as outreach staff, it was the view of the group that there would not be sufficient time to vet & train volunteers for the festive period 2021/2022.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** Following the decision of the Committee a working group was established with representatives of the Licensing and the Communities teams. The working group has included representatives from Police Scotland, WDCVS (West Dunbartonshire Community & Volunteering Services, an organisation which supports community volunteering activities across West Dunbartonshire). The membership has since been expanded to include HSCP, Y- Sort-it, Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol, and Performance & Strategy.
- 4.2** The group held its first meeting in April 2021, and has met 5 times to date. The working group has been studying how the previous Night Zone scheme operated and exploring how any new scheme should be set up.
- 4.3** As part of this process a particular focus has been on the viability of introducing a street pastoring service as part of any future scheme. A guest speaker from Street Assist Edinburgh provided valuable insight into the provision of a street pastoring service. In particular the working group noted that sourcing volunteers is an intensive process, and that training and Covid-19 mitigation and risk assessment means that running a volunteer scheme is highly time consuming in the current climate.
- 4.4** In relation to the provision of taxi marshals, an invite to tender was sent out timeously to all relevant providers who are included in the one Scotland Excel Tendering register. To date all providers contacted have either declined to tender, or have not responded to the invite.

- 4.5** Given the problems identified in the proceeding paragraphs, and also due to uncertainty in relation to Covid-19 it was the unanimous view of the group that the viability of a scheme in 2021/2022 was not viable.
- 4.6** The Scottish Government's decision in August 2021 to move 'beyond level 0' has led to the opening up of the night-time economy and all licensed premises, including nightclubs are open. There is now an expected upturn in footfall within the night time economy for the forthcoming festive period and on that basis it is recommended that the Committee considers carefully the recommendation at para. 2.1, to formally approach Police Scotland to discuss the viability of the Council contributing funding, no greater than the existing NZW budget of £12,000 to Police Scotland to assist in the Division's Festive Policing Plan for the festive period 2021/2022 in lieu of the former NZW scheme.
- 4.7** As part of the consultation on this item, the West Dunbartonshire local Licensing Forum was updated with the work of the working group. The Forum commended the work which has been carried out and also shared concerns about the viability of the scheme in 2021/2022. The Licensing Forum has pledged its full support of the concept of such a scheme.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no such implications of this report at this time.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** There are no financial or procurement implications.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** There is a potential risk that in the absence of any such safety scheme or alternative thereto that public confidence in attending our night time economy areas may be affected.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** The working group has been actively considering the equalities issues when exploring options for future provision, which are recorded in a draft Impact Assessment.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** The Chief Officer – Resources has been consulted in connection with the terms of this report, as has the Local Licensing Forum.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 A night time safety scheme contributes to the strategic aim of strong local economy and improved job opportunities.

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Date: 31 August 2021

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Appendices: None.

Background Papers: None.

Wards Affected: Primarily wards:
Lomond
Leven
Dumbarton
Clydebank Central
Clydebank Waterfront