

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Agenda Item 99**  
Brighton & Hove City Council

**Subject:** **Alcohol-Related Hospital Admissions;  
Referral from Health Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**Date of Meeting:** **27 April 2010  
(14 April 2010 Health Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee)**

**Report of:**  **The Director of Strategy and Governance**

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**Wards Affected:** All

## FOR GENERAL RELEASE

### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 It has long been recognised that excessive drinking has a major impact on Brighton & Hove residents and visitors and on key city services. This impact is felt in many ways across the city, but a particularly important issue concerns the number of people requiring hospital treatment for alcohol-related problems.
- 1.2 Reducing the rate of alcohol-related hospital admissions is a priority for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and forms one of the targets in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Progress on meeting this LAA target has been disappointing: the LAA indicator is currently 'red'.
- 1.3 The Overview & Scrutiny Commission (OSC) is committed to working with city partners to help improve LAA performance, particularly in terms of scrutinising red LAA indicators.
- 1.4 Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) members had previously expressed an interest in examining the issue of alcohol-related hospital admissions in some detail, perhaps via an ad hoc panel.
- 1.5 The Director of Public Health has supplied additional information on this topic (see **Appendix 1** to this report).

1.6 It was recommended that the HOSC:

- (1) note the information contained in the report and in the additional information supplied by the Director of Public Health (**Appendix 1**);
- (2) determine whether to set up an ad hoc panel to investigate aspects of the issue in greater depth.

1.7 HOSC members recognised that this was a very important issue for the city, and one which might well merit a scrutiny review. However, several members noted that there were cross-cutting issues involved here, perhaps particularly in terms of licensing policy and enforcement, policing and community safety: areas which do not directly fall within the remit of the HOSC. It was therefore agreed that the issue should be referred to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to determine whether a Select Committee should be established to examine this issue, or whether the OSC was content for the HOSC to set up an ad hoc panel.

1.8 An extract from the draft minutes of 14 April HOSC appears as **Appendix 2** to this report.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- (1) That the OSC considers whether to establish a Select Committee to investigate the issue of rising alcohol-related hospital admissions in the city;

and if Select Committee is established:

- (2) To appoint Select Committee members; consider the Select Committee's remit/Terms of Reference; and consider when the Select Committee should aim to report back to OSC.

## **3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3.1 The excessive consumption of alcohol is a growing problem, both nationally and locally. An important aspect of this issue is the impact problematic drinking has on NHS services, in relation to both the long-term treatment and care of people with alcohol-related conditions (e.g. liver damage, heart disease etc.); and the short-term effect that mass drinking (particularly at the weekend) has on NHS capacity - i.e. A&E services. More detailed information on this subject has been supplied by the Director of Public Health (**Appendix 1**).

- 3.2 This is obviously an important issue, and one which might merit the attention of Overview & Scrutiny. However, in deciding whether to set up a scrutiny review, members should also consider whether there is 'value' to be added by so doing – i.e. whether there is a realistic opportunity for scrutiny to make recommendations which might improve things at a local level.
- 3.3 If members do choose to establish a scrutiny review, they may also wish to determine/restrict the remit at this stage, as the subject is potentially very wide-reaching. Members may also want to consider when it would be desirable for a scrutiny review to present its findings– i.e. effectively to determine the duration of the scrutiny. Clearly the breadth of any remit and the amount of scrutiny activity are closely linked.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 No formal consultation has been undertaken in preparing this report.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Resource implications of establishing a Select Committee will be managed within the current scrutiny team budget.

##### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission can approve the appointment of Select Committees according to Part 6.1 paragraph 4.1 of the Council's Constitution.

##### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 None directly. If a Select Committee is established, then equalities issues will inform the panel's work-planning process.

##### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 None directly.

##### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Alcohol is a key factor in much crime and disorder, and, should an ad hoc panel be established, it is likely that members would wish to canvass the views of the police, the Licensing Authority etc.

##### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 None identified.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Reducing the rate of alcohol-related hospital admissions is an LSP priority, and is one of the targets in the LAA.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. Information provided by the Director of Public Health
2. Extract from the draft minutes of 14 April Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Documents in Members' Rooms:**

None

**Background Documents:**

None