

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Statutory Licensing Committee 10 November 2021
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Report title	Late Night Safe Haven	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Ross Cook, Director for City Housing and Environment	
Originating service	Licensing	
Accountable employee	Paul Dosanjh	Service Manager: Trading Standards & Licensing Act.
	Tel	01902 556056
	Email	Paul.Dosanjh@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	None	

Recommendation for decision:

The Statutory Licensing Committee is asked to:

1. Endorse the plans set out to improve the current safe haven provision providing additional safety measures for the evening and night time economy in the run up to the Christmas period.

Recommendation for noting:

The Statutory Licensing Committee is asked to note:

1. The partnership working, professionally and financially of the BID, West Midlands Police and Licensing Services to deliver the revamped Late Night Safe Haven.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The report seeks to update Committee on the changes that have been made to improve the current Late Night Safe Haven service.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Late Night Safe Haven is an initiative in Wolverhampton City Centre which is delivered through a partnership of City of Wolverhampton Council, Wolverhampton BID (Business Improvement District) and West Midlands Police.
- 2.2 The majority of the city's pubs, clubs and bars are located within walking distance of each other, making the city centre a prime location for customers to spend the entire duration of their night. The introduction of the well-known cocktail chain, alongside those clubs and bars exclusive to the city has resulted in the centre becoming a popular hotspot, primarily for 18- to 25-year olds, with over 1.6 million visitors per year (between 18:00 and 06:00). The evening and Night Time Economy (NTE) is therefore a major contributor to the economic health of the City.
- 2.3 Some visitors to the NTE may find themselves in a situation where they require assistance in the form of medical intervention or support finding a safe route home. They may find themselves vulnerable as a result of alcohol or drug use and be placing themselves in harm's way if they become separated from friends and isolated. The Safe Haven addresses these concerns.
- 2.4 An initial trial of the service in 2019 proved a huge success in supporting the night-time entertainment scene and partners were keen to see the service reintroduced to assist with the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. As a result, the service was reintroduced in May this year with the dual purpose of protecting revelers and helping our hard-pressed hospitality industry by making the City Centre a welcoming place for visitors and provide a direct service to a private hire/taxi to get people home safely.
- 2.5 The Safe Haven trailer is currently located outside Halifax bank in Queen Square, where it provides some shelter for people of all ages to wait for a licensed taxi after their night out and to receive assistance should they have any concerns about their personal safety. It is a secure supervised space with first aid provisions, hot drinks and free flip-flops for those who wish to remove their heeled shoes which may make them prone to trip hazards on their way home.
- 2.6 St. John Ambulance have been in operation as part of Safe Haven since May 2021 through their Community Response Team. To date, St. John Ambulance has treated 42 patients of which 79% have had their treatment completed and have either returned home or carried on with their night; 14% have been transported to hospital by the St. John Ambulance Crew and 7% have been transported to hospital by West Midlands Ambulance Service.
- 2.7 St. John Ambulance provide a responsive and dynamic service to ensure that the citizens of Wolverhampton have the medical support that they need when visiting the NTE in the City Centre

- 2.8 The Night Guardians also patrol the city and engage with local pubs, bars and venues to help assist with the reduction of night-time anti-social behaviour. The Night Guardians provide vehicle control and supervision for the private hire vehicles in the city together with providing a welcoming, helpful and reassuring presence to City Centre visitors. The Guardians are also crucial in helping partners understand what is happening in the City Centre and are a key link in warning business about the presence of perpetrators or offenders. The Safe Haven trailer acts as a base for the sharing of information about areas or incidents of concern as it is also regularly visited by the Police and the Guardians during the course of an evening.
- 2.9 The Safe Haven operates on the Friday and Saturday of “payday weekends” from 10pm to 4am. It has done so on fourteen nights since the relaunch on 21 May. Social media interest in the pilot reached an audience of 57,000. On the last occasion staff actively engaged and dealt with over 100 service users and provided medical assistance to 20 individuals
- 2.10 The Safe Haven is also used to publicise the roll out of the “Ask for Angela” campaign which provides a route of safety through asking bar staff to “ask for Angela” for anyone who finds themselves threatened during a night out in one of the participating premises. It also actively promotes the council’s Get Home Safe Scheme by providing a rest point while a taxi is arranged to take them safely home. The haven is also a public and tangible statement of the Council and its partners’ attempts to make the City Centre NTE a safe and welcoming place for visitors, especially women.

3.0 Proposed improvements.

- 3.1 The Safe Haven currently operates from a trailer which has to be delivered to and collected from the location each night that the haven operates. This arrangement is restrictive in terms of location. The trailer is also unwieldy, and it is difficult for it to negotiate the street furniture in the City Centre. The partners have decided that a more flexible alternative should be considered.
- 3.2 The intention is to purchase a “welfare vehicle.” The vehicle is to be equipped with amenities which allow workers to have a comfortable and safe place while on site. The fully branded vehicle, advertising the safe haven facilities, will be fitted with an awning allowing a larger area to help clients. The van will also have a built-in ‘staff toilet’ and running hot and cold water.
- 3.3 A vehicle serving this purpose is currently being sourced and will be part funded by West Midlands Police. Licensing Services will fund the remainder of the vehicle purchase and running cost.
- 3.4 Licensing Services are speaking to the University of Wolverhampton about securing students who would volunteer to be involved in operating the Haven. We are looking to target those students for whom volunteering with a public service forms part of their degree so that the arrangement is mutually beneficial. This arrangement may also partly defray some of that part of the cost of operating the safe haven which goes on paying staff to operate it.

- 3.5 Additionally, the formation of a wider staff group who can operate the safe haven may allow for more flexibility for the safe haven to be run over greater number of nights- particularly in the run up to Christmas.
- 3.6 Additional operating nights will obviously incur extra cost. Licensing have put in a bid for government funding under the Safety of Women at Night Fund (SWAN) and if successful this will help fund additional nights between November 2021 and March 2022.
- 3.7 As part of the SWAN funding, the proposal also includes hiring a set of portable toilets which can be located in close proximity to the Safe Haven to prevent women and girls seeking out secluded locations to go to the toilet, which trends have shown, increases the likelihood of an attack happening.
- 3.8 Responses from the Council's Gender, Maternity and Paternity Forum survey also found that respondents stated they would feel safer if there was a higher police presence on a night-time. The Council, working in partnership with West Midlands Police, would use SWAN funding to increase Safety of Women at Night patrols in the form of uniformed and plain clothed officers who could seek to reduce vulnerability through proactive approaches to females and provide an enhanced service when sexual crimes are reported. The funding would also be used to undertake more offender management and resource visits to convicted offenders or those who have been acting suspiciously to prevent sexual crimes from occurring.
- 3.9 Licensing Services are participating in a Women's Safety event in early December with West Midlands Police and the BID about staying safe over the festive period. The event will be looking to promote travelling safely at night for everyone but will be specifically aimed at women both in the University and the wider community.
- 3.10 It is planned for there to be a stall at the University and one in the Mander Centre. This will be pre party season and will provide an opportunity to use the promotional material that was bought for the University Freshers Fair. It will also provide an additional opportunity to promote the role of the Safe Haven.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 This report is an update for information and the relevant financial approvals will be sought separately as appropriate.
- 4.2 A grant bid has been made to the Safety of Women at Night (SWAN) fund which, if successful, will provide portable toilets and an increase in the number days the safe haven can operate. [SB/02112021/V]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report as this is simply the extension of a service that has been previously provided.
[JB/28102021/A]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report as this is simply the extension of a service that has been previously provided

7.0 All other Implications

7.1 There are no implications arising from this report for climate change and environmental, Human Resources, Corporate Landlord, Health and Wellbeing or Covid-19 Pandemic.

8.0 Background papers

8.1 Licensing Committee 09/09/2015 – Update on Wolverhampton Alcohol Strategy