

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Statutory Licensing Committee 11 January 2023
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Report title	Late Night Safe Haven	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	John Roseblade, Director of City Housing and Environment	
Originating service	Licensing	
Accountable employee	Paul Dosanjh	Service Manager: Trading Standards & Licensing Act.
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Report to be/has been considered by	None	

Recommendations for noting:

The Statutory Licensing Committee is asked to note:

1. The successful partnership working, professionally and financially of the Wolverhampton Business Improvement Company Ltd (BID), West Midlands Police and Licensing Services to deliver the revamped Late Night Safe Haven.
2. The use of current revenue budgets within Licensing Services to fund the staffing of the safe haven.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To update Councillors on the recent enhancements to the safe haven facility and note the staffing of the safe haven, funded from licensing revenue budgets.
- 1.2 The Committee is also asked to note the successful partnership support both operational and financial of the BID, West Midlands Police and Licensing Services to deliver the revamped Late Night Safe Haven

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 or isolated from friends. The Safe Haven addresses these concerns.
- 2.4 A key feature of the Safe Haven is attempting to help obtain taxis for customers who wish to go home safely and quickly at the end of the night. This may range from speaking to operators to book the journey to allowing customers to re-charge run down mobile phones to enable them to call for a taxi themselves. Customers can even be escorted to a waiting vehicle where there is a concern about their personal safety.
- 2.5 The rapid and safe emptying of the City Centre in the early helps reduce the incidence of crime and also contributes to the safety of women who may be vulnerable thorough being alone or suffering the after effects of drinking alcohol.
- 2.6 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 2021 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 service to a private hire/taxi to get people home safely.
- 2.7 In 2021 following the award of funds from West Midlands Police of £15,000 a welfare vehicle was purchased. The Councils contribution to the vehicle was £5,000. The vehicle has a small seating area with tables and chairs as well as the provision to provide hot drinks and charge mobile phones for customers whose low charge means that they

cannot contact anyone. The vehicle is liveried with the names of the partner organisation that run and support the Safe Haven.

- 2.8 Additionally, the Council funds the cost of diesel, insurance and servicing and these costs along with others are detailed in the table below. The table below also includes the costs of staffing the Safe Haven per night-this includes staff costs and security costs. The intention would be to fund 50 nights to give a good and regular presence in the City Centre including dates to support the hoped for extra footfall from the reopening of The Halls, formally the Civic Halls.

Expenditure Item	Cost (Since April- 2022)	Projected full year cost (40 nights)	Projected cost for (50 nights)
	£	£	£
Diesel	246	600	660
Service and MOT including consumables and repairs	528	528	528
Staffing Costs	4,994	9,988	10,987
Security costs	1,420	2,840	3,124
Cleaning of van surfaces	438	730	803
Cleaning of toilet(including emptying of waste "cassette")	396	1,188	1,307
Total running costs	8,022	15,874	17,409
One off costs	835	835	835
	(Design and production of van signage)		
Total cost -this financial year	8,857	16,709	18,244

- 2.9 The BID annually provides £12,000 to the Safe Haven which is used to pay for the medical provision of the St. John Ambulance and an additional £10,000 annually to the Night Guardian service.

- 2.10 The Night Guardian Service is an extension of the daytime City Ambassador service. The team of 2 Night Guardians provide a friendly welcome to all visitors to the city during the evening, they assist and liaise with our evening venues to ensure the smooth running of the evening economy and will also provide a visual deterrent to assist with any anti-social behaviour.
- 2.11 It is hoped that the self-contained vehicle could also be used to provide Safe Haven facilities at local events or in other centres of the night time economy in Wolverhampton for example Bilston and Wednesfield
- 2.12 The Safe Haven trailer is currently located outside Halifax bank in Queen Square, where it provides 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 provision, hot drinks, water 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.
- 2.13 The Council and BID currently aim to run the Safe Haven for 40 Nights year which is mainly timed at “payday weekends” and at special City Centre events when footfall in the NTE is greater.
- 2.14 With the welcome re-addition of the Civic Halls to the NTE we would be like to be in a position to run the service 50 nights to account for the extra footfall from concert goers.
- 2.15 St. John Ambulance have been in operation as part of Safe Haven since May 2021 through their Community Response Team. Since April 2022 the team have dealt with 155 patients, 142 (92%) of whom were treated and discharged on location with only 13 requiring hospital treatment.
- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 A notable intervention was where Safe Haven colleagues spotted a distressed female on a night out in the City Centre. A man had grabbed hold of the woman and was walking through the square, pretending they were a couple.
- 2.18 The woman then made a hand gesture to the members of the Safe Haven team who intervened immediately. The woman was supported whilst the male continued to try and tried to coax her away. By alerting the Police and waiting with the woman until they arrived the team were able to ensure that no harm came to her. Police officers arrived, investigated and arrested a man who was subsequently charged with kidnap
- 2.19 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 message by providing a rest point while a licensed taxi or private hire vehicle 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 all visitors, especially women.

3.0 Proposed improvements.

- 3.1 Licensing Services are in ongoing discussions with 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Additional operating nights obviously incur extra cost. A successful government funding under the Safety of Women at Night Fund (SWAN) has been successful and this has helped to fund a total of 68 additional nights over the course of the funding period additional nights between November 2021 and March 2022.
- 3.4 A number of improvements to the van are also being undertaken. These will include an awning and shielding from, inclement weather. These awnings will also improve the "footprint" of the haven and help fix it in the minds of Night Time Economy users even more firmly. The improvements will also provide more capacity and some comfort against inclement weather The "one off" costs of these improvements are given below and will be met out of existing revenue budgets within Licensing Services

Improvement to Safe Haven van	Cost (£)
Additional awning including supply and fit	1,176
Purchase of additional tables and chairs	160
Wrap around Wind Shield	90
TOTAL COST	1,426

- 3.5 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 the Police say increases the likelihood of being attacked. Once again funding of £5,000 from the West Midlands Police Violence Reduction Unit will help defray the cost of providing these toilets or of suitable alternative provision.

3.6 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, will 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.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 The provision for Safe Haven, current and proposed, can be met from within Licensing budgets.

4.2 A grant bid has been made to the Governments Safety of Women at Night fund, which was successful and so will provide for portable toilets (or alternative provision) and as a further increase in the number days the Safe Haven can operate.

[SB/20122022/B]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report as this is the extension of a service that has been previously provided.

[AB/20-12-2022/108]

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