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HM Government

Alcohol Strategy Group

Revised Minutes of the Government and Partners Alcohol Working Group
Meeting held at
Conference Room 5b, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF on
Thursday 28th September at 2.00 (**Meeting 5**)

PRESENT

Mandie Campbell, Director of Drugs, Alcohol and Community Safety Directorate
(HO)
(In the chair)

Jeremy Beadles (WSTA), Brigid Simmonds (BBPA), Bruce Ray (Barcardi),
Campbell Evans (Scotch Whisky Association), Chris Heffer (DH), Sarah Hanratty
(Portman Group), Dr Kieran Moriarty (British Society of Gastroenterology), Chris
Sorek (Drinkaware), Nick Sheron (The British Association for the Study of the
Liver), [REDACTED] (DfE), [REDACTED] (DEFRA), Jonathan Shepherd (Cardiff
University), Scott Wilson (Molson Coors), [REDACTED] (HO), Gus Jaspert (HO),
Don Shenker (Alcohol Concern), Ian Gilmore (Liverpool Hospital), Jon Stoddart
(ACPO), Alison Rogers (British Liver Trust), Andrew Langford (British Liver Trust)

APOLOGIES

Zoe Dayan (BIS), Kieran Simpson (Heineken), Grant Eastwood (Morrisons)
[REDACTED] (HMT), Elizabeth Woodeson (DH), Ruth Hussey (NHS), Jacqui
Kennedy (Birmingham City Council), [REDACTED] (DEFRA), Kieran Simpson
(Heineken), [REDACTED] (CLG), David Poley (Portman Group)

SECRETARY

[REDACTED] (HO)

Item 1: Welcome and introduction

1. **The Chair** welcomed all those present to the fifth meeting of the
Government and Partners Alcohol Working Group and introduced Gus Jaspert as
new head of the Drug and Alcohol Unit.

Item 2: Minutes of the last meeting

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2. **The Chair** referred to the recent Panorama programme, *Dying for a drink* and reminded the group of its remit. She wished to ensure that the working group could continue to enjoy free and frank discussions. The Chair added that the group provided an opportunity for all sides: government departments, health academics, alcohol organizations and the drinks trade to contribute to discussions and share ideas.

Action – Secretary to circulate Terms of Reference for the working group with the minutes.

Minutes from meeting 4

3. Kieran Moriarty pointed out that his name was incorrectly referenced as 'Murphy' in paragraph 19.

Jonathan Shepherd suggested two amendments to paragraph 22 4) and 9):

This should be amended to read:

Paragraph 22

4) Community Safety Partnerships could make greater use of licensed premises security staff by drawing on their expertise. This could include inviting a representative to share good practice at CSP meetings.

9) Consideration should be given to dedicated groups responsible for managing the night-time economy.

4. **The Chair** stated that there were 7 action points to be considered from the last meeting. She ran through these:

- 1) [REDACTED] would provide an update on this on the Bill in item 3.
- 2) Completed.
- 3) Jeremy Beadles and Scott Wilson agreed the data and thought it was worth consolidating data from 2010 and 2011. Jonathan Shepherd and Jon Stoddart voiced concern about the availability of very cheap cider. The Chair asked for confirmation that the data could be shared.
- 4) [REDACTED] confirmed comments to [REDACTED] paper had been received.
- 5) Chris Heffer confirmed the Department of Health was aiming to publish the Alcohol Strategy by the end of the year.
- 6) Brigid Simmonds suggested the Portman Group's leaflet on the sale to drunks could be updated.
Action: Brigid Simmonds to seek amendment to the leaflet.
- 7) An update on action point 7 from the last meeting will be provided at the next meeting. This was a two part measure: a) to encourage CSPs to

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promote responsible behaviour and consider how best practice could be shared; and b) How CSPs could be encouraged to draw on the experience of those playing an integral part in the late night economy (such as accredited door staff) as part of their work to reduce crime.

Action: The drinks trade to share with the group measures they are taking to shift the market away from drinks such as very cheap cider. This will be used to help inform a discussion at the next meeting.

Item 3: Update on the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act.

5. [REDACTED] updated the group on the Act. She explained that it had been given Royal Assent on 15th September. None of the provisions would come into effect on that date. April and October were common commencement dates and it was most likely that the first measures to be implemented would take place in April 2012. However, this date needed Ministerial confirmation.

6. Secondary legislation was needed for the late night levy and EMROs. The Home Office was likely to begin consultation in October/November on these. A fees consultation was not likely until the New Year. Technical consultation groups would be set up for all these matters.

7. [REDACTED] added that the s182 Guidance linked to the Licensing Act 2003 would be revised in view of the changes in the Act and was likely to be published in April 2012 with the commencement of the measures in the Act. Guidance on tools and powers was also likely to be issued around the same time.

8. [REDACTED] clarified that 70% raised from the late night levy would go to the police and 30% to licensing authorities.

Action: The group to be updated about work of the Technical Consultation Groups so members can contribute to those discussions.

Red Tape Challenge

9. [REDACTED] explained that the initiative, led by BIS and the Cabinet Office aimed to reduce bureaucracy to industry. This has helped to provide increased flexibility locally for TENS.

10. It was stressed that the Home Office wished to steer a path between reducing unnecessary bureaucracy without jeopardizing measures on control.

Action: HO to provide Brigid Simmonds with contact details for the government's RTC Champion for Tourism (Alan Parker).

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Action: [REDACTED] to circulate RTC press release and to keep the group updated.

Action: Chris Heffer to look at including CIPs as part of the strategy and all to provide evidence where CIPs are not working to [REDACTED]

Questions raised:

11. Kieran Moriarty asked about drink ordered on-line by those under 18 and whether this had been examined following the last meeting.

Action: Jon Stoddart volunteered that the Durham Constabulary would look into problem profiling and test purchasing of online alcohol sales and asked the group to provide evidence of the problem.

Item 4: The likely impact of changes to the Licensing Act

12. Don Shenker outlined the proposed changes to the Licensing Act. He referred to research carried out by Alcohol Concern, *One on Every Corner* which concluded that greater outlet density led to a higher consumption of alcohol particularly among young people. He added that the report found that 10% of hospital admissions may be attributable to the density of off-licensed premises locally. He pointed out that at present a licensing authority was obliged to grant a licence where the licensing objectives were all met and that there was no national list containing reasons for licence refusals.

13. It appeared to him that previous guidance issued under the former government about Cumulative Impact Policies did not appear to be followed. He was also added that he was concerned about the lighter touch brought about by RTC to controlling measures on the availability of alcohol.

14. Some representatives of the drinks trade highlighted their concerns with the report. In particular, concern was expressed about the link made between the rates of hospital admissions in relation to off licence density. They had concerns that where no such link was found – as was the case in London – that the finding was dismissed as an anomaly. Drinks industry representatives suggested more research was needed to back up the claims.

15. [REDACTED] suggested to Don Shenker that s 182 of the Statutory Guidance would be revised to highlight to licensing authorities the role Cumulative Impact Policies could play in controlling off-licence density in an area. She offered to put him in contact with contacts in Brighton where the policy was used to this effect.

Action: The Home Office to provide Alcohol Concern with contact details about Brighton's CIP.

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Item 5 a) The government response to the riots: the chain of information. Introduced by Brigid Simmonds

16. Brigid Simmonds explained it was difficult to get information from the government during the riots on the approach that the licensing trade should take. The Chair agreed that this was a valid point and that government departments had responded differently to the riots. She agreed that it was important that the government presented a united front to partners especially during a time of crisis.

Action: Jon Stoddart volunteered to capture lessons from the Police and pass them to Brigid Simmonds.

Item 5b) How will the new alcohol strategy address individual responsibility?

17. Brigid Simmonds suggested there needed to be a balance between the responsibility of retailers and drinkers and suggested that some thought ought to be given to how drinkers could be encouraged to take responsibility for their actions.

18. A discussion followed in which questions were raised about the balance of personal responsibility alongside that of the drinks trade and the government. The Chair pointed out that the Home Office had responsibility for responding to a range of questions on crime and disorder in relation to alcohol. Representatives from the drinks trade broadly felt that while they and the government had a responsibility in this area that individuals should bear some responsibility for their own actions. Health professionals felt that the government and the drinks trade had a strong influence and should take the measure of this responsibility.

Item 6: What will a healthy culture of drinking look like in 10 years' time (in which drunkenness is unacceptable)? How will the industry and government achieve this? Introduced by Jonathan Shepherd

19. Prof. Shepherd suggested that while culture was hard to change it was not impossible and cited the examples of the change in attitudes to smoking and wearing seatbelts in cars. There was a generally held belief among retailers, drinkers and the police that drunkenness was unacceptable. However, with 1 million hospital admissions a year due to alcohol and 17,000 deaths a year attributable to alcohol something significant was needed to change the culture.

20. He added that people still held a *belief* that it was acceptable to 'get wrecked' and that he believed that 'upselling' by irresponsible premises was something which needed to be addressed. He suggested that test purchasing the offence of the sale of alcohol to drunks using actors was one method to assess the level of this. He also believed that there was a disproportionate number of people drunk in the night-time economy and that this should be addressed by

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introducing more sober people (with measures to diversify the night-time economy). In his view, the drinks industry could help reduce harm by ensuring the areas around premises were clean and tidy. This would help to reduce harm. He added that early intervention measures, such as the work by the police in Durham, can help to transform an area but asked whether a stronger term was needed for alcohol and suggested 'liquor' might be more appropriate.

21. A discussion followed led by the Chair who suggested that people had become more or less accustomed to obvious signs of heavy drinking such as vomit in the street. Nick Sheron felt there had been a move by the drinks trade in the 1990s to target children with the focus on alcopops. He suggested that a comparison between Britain and former colonies with a similar culture but who drank less, for example America, Australia and New Zealand, would provide a useful study as generally speaking their liver-death rates were a third of Britain's. Health representatives felt that there was a scope for individual responsibility but as the government and the drinks industry had considerable influence that they should bear the burden of responsibility to ensure people did not drink to excess. They also felt there should be strong protection for the poor through minimum pricing. Chris Heffer added that it required a behaviour change and that the Responsibility Deal would cover a range of matters

Any other business

22. In answer to Alison Rodgers query about the Science and Technology Committee's review of unit guidelines, Chris Heffer confirmed that Parliament was looking at whether the government should review the guidelines and there was no presumption that he perceived that they should rise. Alison Rodgers also expressed her concern that liver health and alcohol awareness were not a leading concern of the Behavioural Insights Unit of the Cabinet Office or the 'change4life' initiative. Chris Heffer explained that the Behavioural Insights Team had done earlier work on some areas of public health. And that, 'change4life' would now incorporate alcohol messages, and something new for alcohol was being planned for the spring.

23. Jonathan Shepherd suggested guidance on NHS trusts needed to be revised as they were now responsible authorities under the Licensing Act. He also thought there was merit in running regional workshops to suggest to the NHS how it can best contribute. The Chair asked health colleagues how best this could be done.

24. The Chair brought the meeting to an end and thanked all for attending.

Date of next meeting

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25. Please note this is different from the date suggested at the meeting and is now **16th January 1.30-3.30, 2 Marsham Street, Conference Room 3a.**