

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

3rd September 2015**REPORT AUTHOR: Senior Licensing Officer****SUBJECT: Licensing Act 2003 – Ten Years on**

REPORT FOR: Information

1. Report by Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA)

1.1 Members may be interested in the findings of a report published by the IEA in May this year. The report titled 'Drinking Fast and Slow – Ten Years of the Licensing Act' it examines statistics surrounding alcohol consumption, crime and disorder and health and how these have been affected following the introduction of the Licensing Act and relaxation of licensing hours ten years ago.

1.2 The following has been extracted from the document summary:

- Introduced in 2005, the Licensing Act allowed more flexibility in pub, bar and nightclub opening times and allowed for the possibility of '24 hour drinking'.
- It was widely predicted that the relaxation of licensing laws would lead to higher rates of alcohol consumption, more binge-drinking, more violent crime and more alcohol-related attendances to Accident and Emergency departments. In the event, none of this occurred.
- Per capita alcohol consumption had been rising for many years, but peaked in 2004 and has fallen by 17 per cent since the Licensing Act was introduced. This is the largest reduction in UK drinking rates since the 1930s.
- Rates of 'binge-drinking' have declined amongst all age groups since 2005, with the biggest fall occurring amongst the 16-24 age group.
- Violent crime declined in the first year of the new licensing regime and has fallen in most years since. Since 2004/05, the rate of violent crime has fallen by 40 per cent, public order offences have fallen by 9 per cent, homicide has fallen by 44 per cent, domestic violence has fallen by 28 per cent and the number of incidents of criminal damage has fallen by 48 per cent. There has been a rise in violent crime between 3am and 6am, but this has been offset by a larger decline at the old closing times (11pm-midnight and 2am to 3am).
- The weight of evidence from Accident and Emergency departments suggests that there was either no change or a slight decline in alcohol-related admissions after the Licensing Act was introduced. Alcohol-related hospital admissions have

continued to rise, albeit at a slower pace than before the Act was introduced, but there has been no rise in the rate of alcohol-related mortality. There was also a statistically significant decline in late-night traffic accidents following the enactment of the Act.

- The evidence from England and Wales contradicts the ‘availability theory’ of alcohol, which dictates that longer opening hours lead to more drinking, more drunkenness and more alcohol-related harm. The British experience since 2005 shows that longer opening hours do not necessarily create greater demand.
- There is little evidence that the Licensing Act led to the creation of a continental café culture, as some proponents of liberalisation had hoped, but the primary objectives of diversifying the night-time economy, allowing greater freedom of choice and improving public order have largely been met. By relaxing the licensing laws, the government allowed consumers to pursue their preferences more effectively. In practice, this resulted in relatively modest extensions in opening hours, not ‘24 hour drinking’. By allowing a greater degree of self-regulation, the Licensing Act benefited consumers without creating the disastrous consequences that were widely predicted.

1.3 The findings of this report appear to be at odds with public perception and media portrayal of the night time economy in Britain today. Should members wish to read the report in full it can be found at:

<http://www.iea.org.uk/publications/research/drinking-fast-and-slow-ten-years-of-the-licensing-act>

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
For Information Only	

Contact Officer	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Sue Jones	01597 827389	01597 827275	susan.jones@powys.gov.uk

Relevant Portfolio Member(s):	Cllr John Powell
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Relevant Local Member(s):	N/A
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