

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
FULL COUNCIL
18 MARCH 2024**

Officer:

ANTI - SPIKING

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Council on a recent presentation to the Recreation & Leisure Committee on Anti-Spiking Initiative by 1st & Bowery
2. To consider providing £700 to fund Phase 2 of the project rollout

ANTI SPIKING

Vince Dovey and Neville Street from 1st & Bowery attended the Recreation & Leisure Committee to provide an update on their anti drink-spiking initiative and to see how the Town Council could help promote it.

Their anti drink spiking campaign was set up as a response to a clear need for a simple to use, cost effective answer to an issue that was of concern to the public, authorities and the night-time economy.

They had developed a coordinated approach to supplying venues with test kits and a simple to use but effective way of reporting the number of tests carried out and the results whether they were positive or negative. This information would provide a clearer picture of the issue whilst allowing the Police and other agencies to target their resources. Research highlighted that those venues with an anti drink-spiking project in place instilled confidence in the public's choice of venue which in turn benefited those venues and supported the night-time economy.

The test strip was developed and validated for the detection of GHB, Ketamine and amines such as Cocaine and amphetamines. The test would not determine what had been used to spike a drink, but it picked up elements of 639 different substances. If a member of the public had been spiked presented themselves to A&E the cost to the NHS would be of £732; if they required Police/Ambulance attendance, the cost would be £2434.

The project sought to work with venues rather than against them, offering training on how to use the test strips, how to record the tests and how to inform their customers on the issues surrounding drink spiking.

The project had initially been funded by the Police & Crime Commissioner and had the full support of West Mercia Police. The project aimed to reduce cases of spiking by visiting venues asking them to sign up to this project. So far 15 venues across the town had already done so. They were hoping that the number of venues supporting this project would rise. Shrewsbury Shopwatch has facilitated awareness training with all licensed premises alongside West Mercia Police.

1st & Bowery sought the Town Council's support in helping to promote the rollout of the second phase of the project aimed to:

- Offer 1000 test strips to members of the public to use in venues that were not currently signed up to the project;
- Offer 1000 “business cards” with a QR code on them to allow members of the public to record instances where they believed they have been spiked;
- Work with the Street Pastors to distribute the above to people on nights out;
- Give the Street Pastors the ability to record instances of drink spiking that they came across whilst carrying out their patrols;
- Use the above to report in the scale and scope of drink spiking in the town, to support council, police, NHS and other agencies to target resources.

The cost of rolling out Phase 2 was £700 and would allow them to be up and running in a very short space of time. The support of the Town Council would be wonderful as not only would it offer a joined-up approach for the town, but it would also allow them to get the message to a much wider audience. The project could not only protect members of the public, but it also worked to support the night time economy whilst saving the police and NHS money, at a time when their resources were stretched. They would be happy to work with the Town Council on a joint publicity drive prior to any launch of phase two, and to include Town Council logos on the cards that they handed out. They believed that their project enhanced the reputation of the town and as they hopefully rolled out the project to towns and cities across the region (and country), they were proud that Shrewsbury was at the heart of this initiative.

Councillors were very supportive of the project and its aim but before the Town Council considered any funding for the second phase it was suggested that it was confirmed the test strips worked before going ahead and that due diligence was required and could there be an endorsement from the Police. Enquiries have been made with the Police and they remain happy to endorse this initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the Report be noted;
- (ii) That the Council allocate £700 towards the rollout of the Phase Initiative in Shrewsbury
- (iii) That Officers work with 1st & Bowery to look at ways of publicising the Town Council’s involvement