

UPDATE TO COMMITTEE ON RECENT UNDERCOVER TEST PURCHASING SURVEY OF ALCOHOL FOR UNDER AGE

**REPORT BY:
Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards**

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to summarise the findings of a recent undercover test purchasing survey of alcohol carried out by the Council's Trading Standards Service in conjunction with the West Mercia Constabulary. This report is for information purposes only.

Background

2. On 9 May 2008 the Council's Regulatory Sub Committee heard four reviews in relation to shops that were found to be selling alcohol to under age purchasers following an earlier survey being carried out. As a consequence of this hearing the Committee imposed conditions to suspend the shops' licences for varying periods of time ranging from 24 hours to 7 days, in accordance with the licensing objectives. These restrictions for the sale of alcohol were imposed on the following premises:
 - i. 'The Local' (Threshers Off Licence), Leominster
 - ii. Spar, Leominster
 - iii. Nisa, Kington
 - iv. M & G Wines, Commercial Road, Hereford
3. During the recent survey undertaken these four premises were revisited along with more than fifty other similar premises countywide, using 16 year-old volunteers.
4. Although the survey found that 19 out of 56 shops were found to be selling alcohol to underage test purchasers, the Licensing Team is pleased to report that the four premises previously restricted by the Regulatory Committee did not.

Issues

4. Clearly the premises that previously had been found to be selling to underage purchasers now appear to be complying with the law, as they did not repeat the offence.
5. This report therefore demonstrates how joint working between Herefordshire Council's Trading Standard Service and the police can then successfully interact with the functions of the Licensing Team and powers of the Regulatory Committee.
6. The findings of this recent survey lend weight to the previous decision made by the Committee to restrict alcohol sales, as it obviously has had a marked effect.

7. It is likely that West Mercia Constabulary will request reviews for at least four of the new premises found to be 'repeat' selling of alcohol to the underage, although this has yet to be raised with the Council and will therefore be the subject of a future committee hearing.

RECOMMENDATION

That the contents of this report be noted and the effectiveness of the previous action taken should reviews for underage sales be brought before the Committee again.