

Consultation on Proposal for an Extension of the existing Public Space Protection Order for Romford Town Centre

Introduction

On the 20th September 2017 the Council made a decision to introduce a Public Space Protection Order (referred to as a 'PSPO') for Romford Town Centre. This was named the *London Borough of Havering (Romford Town Centre) Public Space Protection Order No 1 of 2017*. This replaced the previous Designated Public Place Order which controlled the consumption of alcohol within the Town Centre requiring individuals to surrender any open containers of alcohol to a Police Officer or Police Community Support Officer on request.

The existing PSPO prohibits the following activities;

1. Persons must not be in possession of an open container of alcohol in a public place within the Alcohol Control Area (save on licensed premises);
2. Persons must not consume alcohol in a public place within the Alcohol Control Area (Save on licensed premises).

The Order was in effect from the 23rd October 2017 for a period of 3 years. Breaching the terms of the PSPO without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence. This means either a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued or prosecution can commence and if found guilty may be liable to summary conviction by a level 3 fine.

Under section 60 (2) of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014, the Council now wishes to apply for an extension of the period of time the Order is in effect before it expires. Under section 72 (1) and (3) of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 the law requires the Council to carry out the necessary publication and public consultation to obtain your views of the proposal to extend the existing PSPO before a final decision is made to do so.

The Proposal

The extension of the PSPO is proposed to continue on the same terms (save for a minor amendment referencing pavement licences) and around the same Plan of the Town Centre area as contained within the existing Order as referred to above.

The Town Centre area will continue to be designated an “**Alcohol Control Area**” as set out in the proposed PSPO Plan in the attached **Appendix 1**.

The restrictions which are proposed to continue are:

- 1. Not to consume alcohol within the Alcohol Control Area (save on licensed premises or on a designated area where a pavement licence is in force); and**
- 2. Not to be in possession of an open container of alcohol within the Alcohol Control Area (save on licensed premises or on a designated area where a pavement licence is in force).**

The PSPO will not affect the possession or consumption of alcohol in clubs, pubs and bars and other businesses licensed to serve alcohol, and will not affect the purchase of alcohol from off-licences within the Town Centre for consumption elsewhere. It only applies to public places. It will also not affect businesses who wish to apply for a pavement licence under The Business and Planning Act 2020 or if one exists under Part 7A of the Highways Act 1980.

Why are the restrictions being proposed?

The Council wishes to extend the existing PSPO under s.60 (2) of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 before it expires as it is satisfied on reasonable grounds that doing so is necessary to prevent the occurrence or recurrence after the expiry of the order of the activities prohibited in the existing PSPO order. That is being in possession of an open container of alcohol and the consumption of alcohol within the ‘**Alcohol Control Area**’ as set out above around Romford Town Centre as outlined in the proposed PSPO plan in attached **Appendix 1**.

Prior to the pandemic Romford Town Centre has traditionally seen a footfall of approximately 11,000 people from Friday to Sunday to shop and visit it’s thriving night time economy. This continues to drive problematic drinking and associated crime, nuisance and anti-social behaviour within the town centre.

Although the number of people visiting has been impacted by the pandemic this is gradually increasing and will continue to do so with the easing of lockdown. However it is apparent that there is a continuing need to prevent the occurrence and reoccurrence of alcohol related nuisance, crime and anti-social behaviour within the town centre.

Figures obtained from the *Safestats Crime Themes Datastore* website show the number of alcohol-related incidents between April 2017 and March 2020 in Romford Town Centre as being the highest in the borough (see Figure 1 below). Within this ward 35% of all logged incidents relating to alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour took place within Romford Town Centre. These statistics are collated from the British Transport Police, Transport for London and the London Ambulance Service.

Figure 1 - Safestats data - incidents related to alcohol logged by Transport Police, TFL and the Ambulance Service between 2017 – 2020:

Romford Town	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Grand Total
BTP	5	2	2	9
LAS	303	248	235	786
TFL	16	7	11	34
TOTAL	324	257	248	829

Metropolitan Ward Level Crime Data shows between the years of 2018 – 2020 notable offences in Romford Town Centre are the highest within the borough. This is set out in **Appendix 2**. The Safestats Crime Group data indicates that between 2019 and 2020 Romford Town Centre has the highest number of offences in comparison with other wards within the borough. For example, in Romford Town Centre disorder related offences stands at 1,007 whereas in other wards it ranges between 400-100. In Romford Town Centre Violence related offences are at 982 whereas in other wards it ranges between 550-100. This data clearly indicates a higher prevalence of violent

and anti-social behaviour related crime within Romford Town Centre which is a cause of ongoing concern for the Metropolitan Police. This data is set out in **Appendix 3**.

The Council has completed a 'Tri-Borough Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2020'. These assessments are undertaken every year. This identifies alcohol and drugs as 'significant enhancers contributing to violence and serious acquisitive crimes'. Over the last ten years in the Crime Survey England and Wales, the victim perceived the perpetrator to be under the influence of alcohol in 47% of all violent crimes, compared to 21% for perpetrators perceived to be under the influence of drugs.

Figure 2 below shows the % of offenders assessed who had alcohol or drugs as a criminogenic need contributing to their offending, by crime type, Ministry of Justice 2015.

Alcohol	Drugs
1. Criminal Damage 60%	1. Burglary 67%
2. Drink Driving 54%	2. Robbery 63%
3. Racially Aggravated 52%	3. Theft and Handling 60%
4. Violence 43%	
All Offenders 54%	All Offenders 37%

In addition to the above, there are 135 licensed premises within the Romford Town Centre within this particular ward area. The Council believes the activities identified in the existing PSPO will occur and reoccur given the high concentration and availability of alcohol from these premises within this catchment area. Therefore an extension of such an Order is necessary in order to limit further alcohol related nuisance etc.

The Council has considered alternative ways to tackle the problem of alcohol related crime, nuisance and anti-social behaviour. The Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides a number of legislative tools to local authorities and the police such as;

1. Injunctions: these are made against individuals to target their behaviour and granted through the court. There is often varying conditions for each order and is a slow and costly process.
2. Criminal Behaviour Orders: these are granted by the Court after an individual has been convicted of a criminal offence. The Court must be satisfied 'beyond reasonable doubt' the offender has engaged in the behaviour which is likely or has caused harassment, alarm and distress. Therefore they only target individual behaviour.
3. Dispersal powers: these powers are only available to the police. They can only compel an individual to leave a specified area for a time limited period of time of 48 hours.
4. Community Protection Notices: These notices focus on the detrimental impact on the quality of life of those living in the locality however they are more appropriate to be used for specific issues against individuals or premises.

Since the existing PSPO has been in place, the Council has also implemented the following measures;

Additional police patrols and the introduction of dedicated town centre police team

Partnership working with licensed premises through safe and sound to stop drinks promotions that encourage excessive drinking

Introduction of polycarbonate glasses in licensed premises, introduction of taxi marshals

Extensive provision of CCTV in Romford Town Centre Ring Road, introduction of door supervisor briefings by police

Workshops in schools and colleges to discourage anti-social behaviour

Task and targeting work to identify and support problematic street drinkers and signpost to appropriate services to help them with any addictions.

However these measures alone are insufficient and the alternative tools set out above under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 are inappropriate in dealing with the wider problem of alcohol related crime, nuisance and anti-social behaviour within the town centre.

The Council considers it is reasonable to extend the existing PSPO since the prohibitions relate to all individuals, alcohol can be disposed and seized of by Council Officers and the Police and the Order can last for a further period of upto three years which will be an effective way of dealing with the problem. The Council can also enforce any breach of the PSPO through Fixed Penalty Notice or by issuing a Summons in the Magistrates Court.

The Police have confirmed to the Council that although dispersal powers can be used, they are ineffective in the long term in dealing with problematic street drinking and the prohibitions within the existing PSPO have proved to be more effective and useful in dealing with the relevant behaviour particularly as the town centre has issues with homelessness and street drinkers.

An extension of the existing PSPO is the main tool that the Council will continue to use to prevent problematic drinking and associated crime and anti-social behaviour in addition to safeguarding vulnerable individuals.

Your views

Havering Council invites the views and response to the questions below of all interested persons as part of its consultation on the proposed extension of the PSPO via:

- **The Council's online Consultation Portal which can be found at:**

<https://consultation.havering.gov.uk/>

- **Alternatively you can answer the questions below in writing and return it to us by post or email.**

(INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS AND POSTAL ADDRESS)

Please answer the following questions:

- (1) Are you aware of any alcohol-related crime, nuisance or anti-social behaviour affecting Romford Town Centre?
- (2) Do you think that by applying for an extension of the existing PSPO restricting alcohol within the Romford Town Centre area is likely to continue to reduce crime, nuisance or anti-social behaviour or improve the experience of residents and visitors?
- (3) Have you personally been affected by alcohol related crime, nuisance or anti-social behaviour within Romford Town Centre within the last 12 months?
- (4) Do you think that the proposed Alcohol Control Area (see appendix 1) targets the correct parts of the Town Centre?
- (5) Overall, do you support or oppose the proposed extension of the PSPO?
- (6) Do you have any other comments to make regarding the proposed extension of the PSPO?

Deadline

Please submit your response no later than **5.30pm on Monday 14th September 2020.**