

## **DoH National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy**

As a Local Authority we recognise the central role that alcohol plays in the social and economic well being of England. However, from an environmental health and health educational viewpoint we are often concerned with the most negative consequences of alcohol misuse. It is from this perspective that we recognise the value of this strategy and wish to comment in relation to some of the point contained.

While it has not been possible to comment on every question the importance of this strategy cannot be understated because of the far-reaching effects of alcohol on society.

In summary we believe that this strategy should recognise:

- that alcohol has never been more accessible than it is currently;
- that the purchasing cost of alcohol in terms of units of £ man hours per unit of alcohol has never been lower than currently;
- and that the volume of alcohol consumed in England has never been higher than at present.

In consideration, allowing for that all of these conditions remain unchallenged in the future this strategy is unlikely to produce the benefits that it seeks to promote.

In response to a selection of questions we would like to make following points:

- Qu. 4. Commercial interests often market alcohol in such close proximity to food that it has in some respect assumed the virtue of being a food item in the weekly shopping basket. This has been achieved without commercial interests having to acknowledge the negative consequences of alcohol misuse.
- Qu. 5. An overriding principle of the strategy should be to apply 'the brakes' to year on year increases in the volume of alcohol consumed in England (outside of annual increase in the size of the +18 population).
- Qu. 8. As a society we need to understand more clearly recent changes in social/cultural behaviours such as 'binge drinking' and where social drinking is not adequately satisfying for the individual without reaching a state of drunkenness.

Qu. 51. The number of complaints made against 'dodgy' alcoholic drinks has increased by 50% over recent years. It would appeal that where product designers come up with products named Cannabis Vodka, Hard Core and Crack Ice they cannot seriously argue they are not targeting young people. Marketing that makes a clear connection between alcohol and other illegal substances and activities should be clearly discouraged.

We hope these points add constructively to the consultation process and look forward to tracking the progress of this strategy as it develops. We believe that there will be issues that we can address locally and that elected Members will also be interested to learn more about what can be done to reduce the negative consequences of alcohol in Rushmoor.