

Report to COUNCIL

Council Motion: Combatting Acid Attacks

Portfolio Holder:

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Purpose of the Report

A motion was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board by Council on 8th November 2017 related to Combatting Acid Attacks.

Executive Summary

A motion was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 8th November 2017 which requested the Board, with the Trading Standards Team and retailers' associations examine the merits and practicalities of introducing a voluntary scheme in Oldham in advance of new legislation and report back their findings to full Council.

Recommendations

Full Council is recommended to note that the Overview and Scrutiny Board, after taking into consideration the report and information provided at the meeting and the House of Commons Briefing Paper, agreed that a voluntary scheme not be introduced at this time. However, the issue would remain on the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme and would be reviewed when legislation had been approved.

Council Motion: Combatting Acid Attacks

1 Background

A motion was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 8th November 2017 which requested the Board, with the Trading Standards Team and retailers' associations examine the merits and practicalities of introducing a voluntary scheme in Oldham in advance of new legislation and report back their findings to full Council.

2 Current Position

2.1 Officers from Economy, Skills and Neighbourhoods reviewed the resolution on the introduction of a voluntary scheme.

2.2 In July 2017, the Home Office announced a new action plan aimed at reducing the number and impact of acid attacks. The plan covers matters such as prosecution guidance for the Police, the scope of the Poisons Act 1972 and whether the criminal courts had sufficient powers (including sentencing powers) to deal with acid attacks. These measures would form part of a wide-ranging review of the law enforcement and criminal justice response, existing legislation, access to harmful products and the support offered to victims. New guidance will also be provided to police officers on preventing attacks, searching potential perpetrators for harmful substances and responding to victims at the scene. Further work will also take place with retailers to agree measures to restrict sales of acids and other corrosive substances.

2.3 Given the widespread nature of availability of products which contain acid, there is no identifiable group with which to consult. There is no recognized group which it is considered could be effectively consulted on this issue.

2.4 At the Institute of Licensing Conference recently attended by a trading standards officer, the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Team presented an item on acid attacks. It was confirmed that there were ongoing discussions in relation to regulating acid sales as reported above and a further announcement would be made in due course following consultation. They advised potentially raising it at the local resilience forum and look at communication issues rather than introducing a scheme at this time.

Outcome

3 The Board discussed the merits and practicalities of introducing a voluntary scheme in advance of legislation and after taking into consideration the report and information provided at the meeting and the House of Commons Briefing Paper (attached at Appendix 1), agreed that a voluntary scheme not be introduced at this time. However, the issue would remain on the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Program and would be reviewed when legislation had been approved.

Appendices:

The House of Commons briefing paper dated 17th December 2017 is attached for information.