

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO LICENSING COMMITTEE

INFORMATION

meeting date: TUESDAY, 14 JUNE 2022  
title: DRINK SPIKING AND LICENSED PREMISES  
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
principal author: STEPHEN BARKER, SOLICITOR

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform Committee of a letter circulated to local authorities by the Home Office regarding spiking of drinks and to advise Committee of the steps already taken by the Council with regards to this issue.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives        }
  - Corporate Priorities         }
  - Other Considerations        }
- The Council aims to be a well managed authority, and to help make people's lives safer and healthier.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Members will recall numerous reports in the press and broadcast media with regard to an apparent increase in the incidence of spiking of drinks in late 2021. This occurs when alcohol or drugs are added to a person's drink without their knowledge. There are different reasons why this can take place, ranging from a 'prank' to preparatory steps before a robbery or sexual assault.

2.2 On 1 April 2022, the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Probation wrote an open letter for circulation to all Members of local authority licensing committees. A copy of that letter is attached at Appendix 1. Further, on 26 April 2022, the Home Affairs Committee of the House of Commons wrote an extensive report into the issue of drink spiking, and also into needle spiking (where someone surreptitiously injects a substance into a victim by hypodermic needle or similar object such as a combi-pen). The Government has two months to respond to the report, which can be accessed on the following link:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/21969/documents/163415/default/>

2.3 Currently, offences in relation to drink spiking include administration of a substance with intent to stupefy or overpower the victim so that any person can engage in sexual activity with the victim (s61 Sexual Offences Act – maximum penalty 10 years on indictment); administration of poison with intent to endanger life/inflict grievous bodily harm (s23 Offences against the Person Act – maximum penalty 10 years); and administration of poison or a noxious thing with intent to injure, annoy or aggrieve (s24 Offences against the Person Act – maximum penalty 5 years). With effect from 13 April 2022, GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyric acid) which is a drug used to spike drinks, has been reclassified as a Class B drug, meaning those found in unlawful possession face a maximum sentence of 5 years, and those involved in supply and production face up to 14 years imprisonment.

### 3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council's officers were pro-active in addressing these issues in the final months of 2021. Members will find at Appendix 2 copies of a document prepared by Lancashire Constabulary for premises licence holders and a policy document prepared by a local security company and distributed to their staff and clients. The Council's Licensing Enforcement Officer distributed this material to licensed premises and at meetings of Clitheroe Pubwatch and the Whalley Pub meeting in November/December 2021. These groups have circulated all their members, and the Council has also circulated members of Longridge Pubwatch.
- 3.2 The Council's Principal Communications Officer included information for residents in relation to this issue in a post on the Council's website on 16 December 2021, offering safety advice to festive revellers. Please find a link to the advice on the website. <https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/news/article/64/safety-advice-for-night-on-the-town-festive-revellers>
- 3.3 Whilst there have been some reports of drink spiking in the Ribble Valley it is understood that, thus far, no patterns or repeat premises issues have been identified.
- 3.4 The House Affairs Committee report recommends collation of information from local authorities and police forces to seek to develop a national strategy to address this issue. These may also be consideration of a review of the guidance under s182 of the Licensing Act 2003 with a view to requiring licensing authorities to consider the prevalence, prevention and reporting of sexual harassment and misconduct and gender-based violence in their Statement of Licensing Policy.

### 4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

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