

## Appendix One

# Report on the Public Houses in South Norfolk Questionnaire

## 1. Background

103 questionnaires were sent out to all the public houses in South Norfolk on 8 July with a covering letter and requesting a reasonably quick response time of 2 weeks. A reply paid envelope was included and also the option of completing the questionnaire on line.

52 completed questionnaires were returned which is a response rate of over 50%, which is way above the norm. An average response rate for surveys/questionnaires carried out by the Council is normally around 10%.

The aim of the questionnaire was to identify the actual factors affecting the pub trade in South Norfolk to inform and assist the Task Group in suggesting options for advice and assistance. As one licensee put it, "Local people are increasingly valuing good quality service over cheaper chain style operations – an opportunity exists for rural pubs to get back to basics."

## 2. Analysis of the factors affecting the pub trade

The full breakdown of answers and every comment received is attached as Appendix A, but to summarise, licensees felt very strongly, or strongly that the following negative factors affected their business:

1) High rent	97%
2) Supermarkets selling cheap alcohol	96%
3) Tax on alcohol	87%
4) Business rates	85%
5) The credit crunch	85%
6) The smoking ban	65%
7) Beer tie constraints	64%
8) Drink drive laws	41%
9) Legislation and red tape	33%
10) Second homes	12%

The other issue mentioned many times was high overheads, especially electricity/gas/fuel (many pubs are on oil fired heating/customers having to drive – fuel costs etc).

In terms of positive factors, licensees felt very strongly or strongly that the following factors increased their business:

1) Customer service	93%
2) Good food	87%
3) Location and passing trade	80%
4) Being child friendly	66%
5) Inclusion in guides, e.g. CAMRA, Good Pub	46%
6) Advertising and marketing	44%
7) Theme nights or quizzes etc	44%
8) Longer opening hours	34%
9) Diversification	32%
10) Special offers, e.g. two for one	27%

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### 3. Suggestions for assistance by South Norfolk Council

We had a huge number of responses to this, as follows:

#### Signage

- Allow more signage on the roads **3 separate responses on this**
- Allow 'A' boards on side of road outside pub.
- More brown signs for pubs **4 separate responses on this**

#### Rates

- Reduce business rates: **18 separate responses suggested this.**
- Continue with rural rate relief.
- To assess rateable (non domestic) value on a case by case basis.
- Reduce VAT rates for small businesses
- Drastically reduce refuse collection charges.
- Reduce council tax on living accommodation
- Help out with council tax

#### Smoking

- To be more helpful with advice on the smoking shelters.
- Allow my smoking shelter to remain where it is.
- Review smoking ban policy
- Write to Government so pubs can become a smoking or a non smoking pub
- Bring back smoking rooms – an opportunity to choose to be smoking/non smoking would have been appropriate.

#### Planning

- Easier planning application process and reduction of costs for applying for planning. 2
- Help with planning consents for erection of smoking shelters and perhaps financial assistance for buying and erecting such shelters
- Grants for using local produce/beer.

#### Other Council issues

- Have all local pubs feature on a page on your website
- Introduce a star quality rating for pubs (food outlets)
- More help with diversification – in my case I believe a visiting post office/library/local councillors surgery/help with setting up a small general stores etc
- Crack down on pubs that are not complying with licensing and smoking bans.
- Encourage events and music festivals and beer festivals.
- SNC could set up champions within the pub trade as examples of well run alcohol outlets.
- SNC could host a campaign based on promoting rural businesses in a positive light, pubs are increasingly being held accountable for the actions of their customers, i.e. noise etc, which to a certain degree is unavoidable. Pubs should be promoted as family friendly encouraging responsible drinking and social/community activity.

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- Stop pubs becoming single age by stopping loud music, which attracts only youngsters deterring the older clients who create stability. If you have nightclub status then the situation would be controllable – then people would not blame pubs.

### **Central Government issues – lobbying?**

- Ban sale of alcohol in supermarkets or stop supermarkets selling cheap alcohol and stop supermarkets creating an easy market/supply for youngsters
- Village pubs get a lot of blame for anti social behaviour caused when young people consuming vast amounts of cheap booze given away as loss leaders by the supermarkets. This is grossly unfair and in most cases not the fault of the pub. When will ministers take note and act?

Members are invited to consider these suggestions along with any practical steps the Council could take.

### **4. Willing witnesses to come and talk to the Task Group**

There was a fantastic response to this request – of the 46 replies, 34 licensees were willing to talk to us. The initial idea was to select perhaps two licensees, one from a successful pub and one from a pub not doing so well, to come and talk to the Task Group as witnesses in the normal way. It has been suggested that in view of the huge response, it might be a good idea to invite all the licensees who responded to perhaps a breakfast meeting where they can network, maybe have some workshops etc.

In terms of other witnesses, I am pleased to report that representatives from Britannia Business Sales (East Anglia) Ltd, Adnams Brewery and Enterprise Inns have agreed to come and talk to the Task Group.

Members are invited to agree on witnesses.

**Joanna Kitchener, Scrutiny and Information Rights Officer**

24 July 2008