COMMUNITY UPDATE
COVID-19

08/07/2020

The introduction of lockdown measures led to many unfamiliar scenes across our county. In the height of restrictions, streets were eerily quiet with shops, pubs and restaurants closed. As we've been afforded greater freedoms and business have been allowed to reopen, the streets have started to become more familiar.

In local policing, one of the biggest changes we've seen throughout lockdown is not deploying public order patrols on Friday and Saturday nights. These are the groups of officers who patrol our towns and cities on a weekend, making sure pub and club goers can enjoy a safe night out.
With venues having to close for more than three months, these teams have enjoyed a break from their normal duties finding themselves redeployed to support colleagues responding to emergency calls and investigating crime (believe me, we can fill their time!) As you'll no doubt have seen or heard, this all changed on Saturday when for the first time in months venues reopened their doors and we planned public order patrols across the county.

This was planning with a difference though as the night life scene is not what it was. Pubs, bars and restaurants can reopen, providing they implement relevant measures to enable them to operate safely during Covid. These measures include reducing capacity, much like shops, and ensuring social distancing can be maintained. Not all venues chose to reopen this weekend but those that did have taken these requirements seriously and all had measures in place to keep staff and customers safe.
Not really knowing how Saturday would pan-out, we planned for all eventualities and had large numbers of resources in place to deal with and issues that might crop up. I'm pleased to report that this weekend passed peacefully without any significant incidents.

Pubs and bars were pretty full but it was a far cry from scenes we're used to for this time of year. I have no doubt as time moves on and people feel reassured by the measures put in place by businesses, more people will venture out. However, what is really important is people recognise that going 'out out' is different now and will be for some time to come. Venues are open but the reduced capacity and restaurant-like booking systems, means places become full pretty quickly. We witnessed many scenes at the weekend where people arrived at venues, without booking, only to be turned away because the venues were full.
This is why it's really important you plan your night and book ahead. As we move forward and the weather improves, we anticipate the increased use of pubs and bars, particularly those in residential areas, could lead to increased noise levels. Venues will be making use of their outdoor areas and we recognise this could present a challenge.

Overall people were well behaved and adapted to the new normal well. We made a limited number of arrests in the Great Yarmouth area for drunk and disorderly behaviour and assault offences but no arrests were made in Norwich or King's Lynn. No arrests on a Saturday night is sadly quite unusual, however this a trend I wouldn't mind seeing more of so please continue to enjoy yourselves safely and responsibly.

Saturday also saw the introduction of new legislation which makes gatherings of 30 people illegal – unless it is for work, training or educational purposes. Throughout the response to pandemic, central government have developed legislation giving us powers to make sure people adhere to lockdown restrictions. As lockdown has eased, so too have the regulations and the enforcement of them. It's important to note that throughout this time we've only ever been able to enforce the public health regulations, particularly around gatherings. The government guidance on social distancing is advice and therefore not enforceable. It is your personal responsibility and that of businesses to follow the guidelines for your safety and that of those around you, which I know the overwhelming majority have and continue to do.

Many thanks - **Temporary Assistant Chief Constable , Julie Wvendth**

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