

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Public Spaces Protection Orders**

Summary of outcomes 2018-2021

ALCOHOL CONTROL AREAS

Location: Tunbridge Wells town centre, Grosvenor and Hilbert Park, St John's Park, Selected roads in Southborough, Ridgeway Playing Field.

Used by Kent Police officers to address issues related to anti-social drinking in open spaces. This is a well-established and often-used power that allows officers to seize alcohol from persons, or groups of people, causing or likely to cause anti-social behaviour.

No known enforcement of this measure has taken place in Southborough.

We propose to renew this measure for Tunbridge Wells town centre for the maximum allowable period of three years.

We propose to discharge this measure on the selected roads in Southborough while retained the prohibition on Ridgeway Playing Fields for a further three years.

DOG CONTROL

Location: Children's fenced play areas (dogs prohibited); St Marks and The Nevill sports grounds (dogs on leads); Boroughwide (dog fouling – a higher penalty charge).

These measures comprise a **prohibition** in respect of children's fenced play areas, a 'keep dogs on leads' **requirement** in two sports grounds and an **increase in the penalty for dog fouling** across the borough. These measures are enforced by the Borough Council's Street Scene Enforcement Officers and Civil Enforcement Officers (dog fouling only).

Following implementation TWBC Enforcement Officers made frequent visits to children's play areas and to the sports grounds to ensure these requirements were being adhered to. One penalty notice was issued for having a dog off the lead in a sports ground and words of advice given to a dozen or more dog walkers/owners.

We propose to renew these measures, or further consult on varying the dogs on leads requirement at the two sports grounds to an outright prohibition, for the maximum allowable period of three years.

NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES (NPS)

Location: Tunbridge Wells town centre.

Kent Police found no value in enforcing the prohibition of using or possessing New Psychoactive Substances through the PSPO, preferring instead to use established legislation to seize substances on the grounds that many NPS's likely contain controlled substances.

Conversations around the implementation of this measure coincided with the introduction of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the closure of many 'head shops' in Tunbridge Wells and across the county.

We are likely to discharge this prohibition.

AMPLIFIED MUSIC

Location: Tunbridge Wells town centre.

We introduced this measure after receiving numerous complaints related to noisy buskers using portable amplifiers in the town centre. Several performers would return frequently and play a limited catalogue of tracks for extended periods of time.

The prohibition is only triggered when the Council receives complaints from affected parties and we have determined that it is causing an *unreasonable* disturbance.

While we have not issued any penalty notices for breaching this condition it has allowed us to have productive conversations with buskers. This has reduced the disturbance caused to local businesses and residents, particularly during summer months when windows are more likely to be open.

We propose to renew this measure for the maximum allowable period of three years.

ROUGH SLEEPING AND BEGGING

Location: Tunbridge Wells town centre.

Not a ban on rough sleeping or begging but a check on the behaviour of those who do. In 2017/18 our open spaces, and in particular, our multi-storey car parks attracted persistent groups of rough sleepers, some of whom would refuse to engage with services and were abusive to the public, council staff, PCSOs and contract cleaning staff. Some often would not leave their 'sites' within a reasonable timeframe and then would leave a great deal of mess in doorways, parks and public car parks while preventing cleaners from performing their duties until late morning or early afternoon. Subsequently, we would receive complaints from

commuters and other members of the public about the mess, the smell and the alarm they experienced passing through an area where people have “partied” the night before and are now sleeping or just waking up.

Similarly, for our very busy town centre, we introduced a measure to address persistent begging where anti-social behaviour was also a factor. This followed several occasions when reasonable requests made to people begging to move from specific locations (such as near an ATM or in a closed shop doorway where adjacent shops were negatively affected by their presence) were met with resistance and verbal abuse. We were also keen to address *professional begging* following several occasions when people from outside Tunbridge Wells came into town to beg on our streets, sometimes feigning long-term injuries to add a perception of vulnerability.

As we anticipated, we have not issued any penalty notices for behaviour related to rough sleeping or begging. The measure did, however, provide us with opportunities for robust and meaningful conversations with people using, or abusing, the public realm and to encourage engagement with available support.

We propose to renew these two measures for the maximum allowable period of three years.