

Licensing Committee Minutes

Date: 15 November 2012

Time: 7.00 - 7.35 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A E Hill (in the Chair)

Councillors D H G Barnes, W J Bendyshe-Brown, J L Richards OBE, R J Scott and D A C Shakespeare OBE.

Standing Deputies present: Councillors: Z Ahmed and A Slater.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor I L McEnnis

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: A R Green, S Lacey, Ms P Lee, S F Parker, J A Savage and A Turner.

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 21 June 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

7 REVIEW OF THE GAMBLING ACT 2005 POLICY STATEMENT

The report under consideration gave details of the statutory requirement that the Council's Licensing Policy under the Gambling Act 2005 should be reviewed and renewed at least once every 3 years and that the review should be preceded by a wide ranging consultation.

Members were informed that a consultation had taken place between 25 June 2012 and 25 September 2012 and that some 150 letters had been sent to organisations and individuals, including responsible authorities, trade organisations, representatives of the licensed trade, representatives of residents, Parish Councils and Members. The consultation had also been advertised on the Council's website.

Only one response had been received which had not suggested any amendments to the Policy. Accordingly, no changes were being proposed to the existing Statement of Licensing Policy.

During discussions, mention was made of the elections taking place that day for the new post of Police Crime Commissioner and it was confirmed that the new

incumbent would be added to the Council's list of consultees in any future Licensing Policy consultation process.

RESOLVED: That the draft Statement of Licensing Policy, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be recommended to Cabinet for endorsement and onward referral to full Council for approval and adoption.

8 INFORMATION SHEET 1/2012 - SUPER STRENGTH ALCOHOL INITIATIVE

The Committee discussed the Information Sheet on the Super Strength Alcohol Initiative which had been circulated to all Members.

By way of background, the Licensing Officer explained that a high alcohol cider called white cider, was widely available across the country at very low cost and often sold in 2 or 3 litre bottles. As a result, it had become the drink of preference for street drinkers, leading to a range of significant crime and disorder issues. Health implications were also associated with consumption of white cider. Research had found it to be readily addictive, and its low unit cost encouraged excessive consumption, with resultant adverse long term health effects. In addition, low taxation levels on cider contributed to high profit margins to retailers on sales of white cider, making it an attractive stock option for some retailers.

It was explained that, under the terms of the Licensing Act, it was not possible for the Council to introduce a general outright ban on sales of white cider and other forms of super strength alcohol in the district. However, authorities elsewhere had implemented voluntary schemes with retailers, achieving positive results in terms of reduced street drinking and knock-on significant reductions in instances of associated crime and disorder.

A recent meeting of Wycombe Nightsafe, the local partnership comprising WDC, Thames Valley Police, Bucks Drug and Alcohol Action Team, Trading Standards and Wycombe Watch amongst other agencies, had strongly supported a proposal to move towards the introduction of a similar voluntary scheme in Wycombe. The next step would be to take the proposal to the Wycombe Town Centre Partnership to test support from local businesses.

Members were strongly in favour of taking forward this approach. There was agreement that the Licensing Unit had worked extremely hard to tackle drink related issues in the town centre and Members praised the Unit's notable achievements in this regard.

During discussions, Members proposed that areas outside Wycombe, including Princes Risborough and Marlow, would also benefit from voluntary schemes. It was agreed that officers would continue to research a voluntary scheme for the district in partnership with local agencies and aim to bring outline proposals for a voluntary scheme for the Committee's consideration in spring 2013.

RESOLVED: That the Committee support the proposals contained in Information Sheet 1/2012 in connection with the Super Strength Alcohol Initiative and request officers to consider options for taking forward an initiative in Wycombe District, reporting back to the Committee in Spring 2013 on progress made.

Post meeting note: the following web address provides useful further information about white cider and its harmful effects.

www.thamesreach.org.uk/publications/research-reports/white-cider-and-street-drinkers/

9 SCHEDULE OF LICENSING PANELS HELD SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the schedule of Licensing Panel Hearings held since the previous meeting be noted.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Caroline Steven	Licensing Team Leader
Brian Whittall	Licensing Officer
Diana Davis	Democratic Services