

LICENSING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a MEETING of the LICENSING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the 26TH NOVEMBER 2007

PRESENT: Cllr. Goddard (Chairman);
Cllr. Feacey (Vice-Chairman);
Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Mrs Blanford, Ellison, Holland, Link, Naughton, Woodford.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs Mrs Heaton, Mrs Martin, Norris.

ALSO PRESENT: Licensing Manager, Environmental Health Manager (Commercial), Police Licensing Officer, Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

328 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing and Health and Safety Committee held on the 16th July 2007 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

329 REVISED LICENSING POLICY

The Licensing Manager introduced this report and explained that the 2003 Licensing Act required a licensing authority to prepare and publish a Licensing Policy every three years. A consultation exercise had been carried out during October and November 2007 (finishing on November 23rd) and the responses received had been recorded and summarised in the tabled report. The Licensing Manager apologised that the summary of representations and responses received had had to be tabled at the meeting but explained that the new policy had to be adopted on the 7th January 2008 so this recommendation had to go to the Executive on the 6th December and then on to Full Council on the 13th December 2007 in order for this to happen.

The Licensing Manager went through each of the consultation comments and they were discussed by Members. The suggested amendments to the policy were agreed subject to minor drafting changes. The Licensing Manager gave the following responses to questions/comments:

- Parish Councils cannot normally make representations on applications themselves (unlike in planning) but they would be able to make the information available in the Parish.
- Pub Watch is a voluntary organisation, therefore, membership should be encouraged rather than required. The majority of Ashford town centre pubs were part of Pub Watch. Tenterden pubs had their own system as Pub Watch did not extend that far.
- Proxy buying was acknowledged to be a problem in regard to preventing underage drinking.

Recommended:

That the revised Licensing Policy as prepared in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003 be approved.

330 UPDATE ON LICENSING ACT 2003

The Police Licensing Officer for the Weald gave the police perspective on the Licensing Act 2003 in the Ashford Borough Council area and tabled a copy of his report.

He advised the Committee that the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003 in November 2005 had brought about greater communication and an improvement in working relationships between the Local Authority and the Police. Operators in the town had shown a positive approach to the new legislation and all were members of the Ashford Partnership Against Crime Pub Watch Scheme. There had been a definite benefit in putting more Officers on the street especially on "red routes" in the town area. All licensees welcomed the increased police presence and frequent night time walk-throughs were both a deterrent and a reassurance to the public.

In partnership with other bodies the Police had developed a number of specific campaigns and initiatives to target alcohol related violence and other licensing issues. An anti social behaviour questionnaire was also being rolled out.

Locally there was concern over alcohol misuse by young people with underage and proxy sales. There was a schools initiative to highlight the dangers of alcohol abuse and the consequences of using fake or false ID to purchase alcohol.

The Police Licensing Officer concluded by saying that the Police would maintain a robust approach to licensing matters. It had not yet been necessary for the Police to apply to the Committee for the review of any premises licence but they would not hesitate to do so if the need arose.

In response to questions/comments the Police Licensing Officer advised:

- Red routes were the main routes that revellers took from premises to premises.
- There had been no increase in public disorder at premises without a rear smoking area, but there had been an increase in litter.
- There was no substantial evidence of spiking of drinks.
- Rural pubs were visited by local beat officers but problems were rare. Off sales premises were also visited.
- The Responsible Alcohol Sales Campaign (RASC), sponsored by the Home Office, Local Authorities and Police, was aimed at preventing bar staff selling to people who were already drunk (and had been successfully trialled in Blackpool and Wales).
- Supermarket sales staff could refuse to sell alcohol to someone if they had reason to believe it was being bought for someone who was underage.
- Alcohol exclusion zones were difficult to initiate. Some London boroughs used Controlled Drinking Zones (CDZs) to reduce alcohol fuelled disorder. CDZs could be designated between certain times and in certain areas.
- Since the 2003 Act the level of training of bar staff would appear to have increased markedly.
- The Ashford Community Safety Unit was held up as an example of good practice in the country not just the county.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

MINS:LHSX0748