

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the LICENSING COMMITTEE held in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 26 October 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor J T Bell – Chairman.

Councillors K M Baker, J J Dutton,
R S Farrer, N J Guyatt, Mrs P A Jordan,
S M Van De Kerkhove, Mrs P E Shrapnel and
J S Watt.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K J Churchill, A Monk and T D Sanderson

8. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th June 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9. MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

10. LICENSING ACT 2003 - STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) inviting the Committee's endorsement of a revised statement of licensing policy under the Licensing Act 2003 prior to its consideration by Cabinet and subsequent approval by the Council.

The Committee was reminded that following its approval by Council the second and existing statement had come into effect on 7th January 2008 for a period of three years. Consequently the Council would need to review its policy and approve a new statement, having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State, to come into effect on 7th January 2011.

The Committee was acquainted with the legislative changes that had taken place since the previous statement of licensing policy had been approved. These included a mandatory code of practice for alcohol retailers, allowing elected members of licensing authorities to become interested parties for the purposes of making representations and applying for reviews, re-classification of lap dancing clubs so that they required a sex establishment licence and new mandatory conditions in relation to the supply of alcohol.

A new draft statement modelled on the existing document, with changes made only where a conflict would arise with the updated guidance had been drawn up and distributed to all Members and comments had been invited from a wide variety of organisations.

Having been informed that the consultation had elicited little response, the Committee

RESOLVED

that the revised statement of licensing policy be endorsed for submission to Cabinet and subsequent approval by the Council.

11. RE-BALANCING THE LICENSING ACT 2003

The Committee noted the contents of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) arising from a consultation paper issued by the Government on proposals to rebalance the Licensing Act.

The Committee was informed that the new coalition Government was of the view that greater flexibility should be introduced to the licensing legislation to make it easier for local communities to ask for a review of premises licences where alcohol consumption was a cause for concern. The Government contended that the current system was overly prescriptive and weighted in favour of the licensed trade. To counteract that, the Government proposed to return to greater discretion on the part of licensing authorities and the police in determining applications and reviewing problem premises.

Having been informed that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee had endorsed a response to the consultation which had closed on 8th September and that further information on any changes ensuing from the consultation would be brought to the Committee as they emerged, Members

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report and the changes forecast in the licensing regime be noted.

12. SECRET GARDEN PARTY

With the aid of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee was acquainted with the issues that had arisen from the Secret Garden Party festival that had taken place in July 2010.

The Committee was reminded that a premises licence had been granted in perpetuity for the event for a period of 5 days each year as no objections to the application had been received from responsible authorities or interested parties.

Members were informed that the festival had taken place between Thursday 22nd July and Monday 26th July 2010 and had attracted 26,000 people. Licensable activities had taken place throughout that period and officers from the Democratic and Central Services and Environmental and Community Health Divisions had been on site for most of the event's duration in order to ensure that the conditions attached to the licence had been adhered to. Both pre and post event meetings had been arranged with event organisers and other

responsible and relevant organisations.

The Committee was advised that issues arising from the post event safety advisory group meeting which had involved representatives of the District and County Councils, Police, Fire and Rescue and Hinchingsbrooke Hospital had included a significant increase in criminal activity, security and health care issues. The popularity of the festival was thought to have attracted a criminal minority who targeted such events nationwide and had resulted in more people than previously trying to gain access by breaking the security arrangements.

Although over 500 people had required medical care and 36 referred to Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, Members were informed that both the hospital and event paramedics had been satisfied with the arrangements made to treat those in need of assistance. A substantial police presence had been funded by the licence holder and the issues identified would be addressed by the licensing and other responsible authorities in the planning of the 2011 festival. Members were informed that the licence holder had indicated numbers would not increase in 2011 and there would be no opportunity for the licence conditions to be revisited unless an application for a review was made by one of the responsible authorities or an interested person.

No letters of objection had been received concerning the event held in July but the Licensing Manager indicated that he was aware that some residents had raised concerns with their respective parish councils and that he would be attending meetings in the near future to ascertain the extent of those concerns.

The Head of Democratic and Central Services advised that the event, which had become well known on the festival calendar, continued to be well managed with a high degree of co-operation on the part of the licence holder with the licensing authority and responsible authorities and was enjoyed by both local people and visitors to the District.

Chairman