

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LICENSING AND APPEALS COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held in the Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City
on Thursday, 5 November 2009 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: *Councillors: P.C.W. Burt (Chairman), Mrs A.G. Ashley, D.J. Barnard, Paul Clark, Lorna Kercher, Mrs J.I. Kirby (until 9.30pm), Marilyn Kirkland, M.R.M. Muir and M.E. Weeks.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Licensing & Enforcement Manager, Senior Licensing & Enforcement Officer, Animal Welfare Officer, Solicitor and Senior Committee & Member Services Officer.*

ALSO PRESENT: *14 Members of the public.*

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Bardett, Clare Body, Tom Brindley, Melissa Davey and Gary Grindal.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Committee held on 16 January 2008 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no notification of other business.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman reminded Members that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda should be declared as either a prejudicial or personal interest, and that they required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should leave the room and not seek to influence the decision during that particular item;
- (2) The Chairman pointed out that the time limit for the members of the public to address the Committee would be for a maximum of 5 minutes each. He advised that the Solicitor would also be reading out the views of another kennel/cattery owner (Mr Eymor), who had originally intended to attend and speak at the meeting, but had been prevented from doing so for personal reasons. The Chairman advised that, once the speakers had all finished their presentations, there would be no further opportunity for them to speak on the matter.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman advised that he proposed to vary the order of business on the agenda, so that the Senior Licensing Officer would introduce Item 6 on the agenda – Proposed Animal Policy 2010, after which the members of the public who had registered to speak at the meeting would be invited to each address the Committee with their views on the Policy (Item 5 – Public Participation), following which the Senior Licensing Officer would respond to any of the points raised, and then the Committee would debate the item.

6. ANIMAL LICENSING POLICY 2010

[Prior to the commencement of this item, Councillor M.R.M Muir declared a personal interest in the matter, as he owned a field adjacent to his property which he let out for the stabling and grazing of horses.

Councillor Paul Clark declared a personal interest in the matter, as he had met one of the public speakers during his time as a former Governor of Whitehill School in Hitchin. The speaker had also been a Governor of the school.]

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer presented a report seeking the Committee's endorsement of the Council's proposed Animal Licensing Policy 2010, prior to consideration of the Policy by Cabinet on 15 December 2009. The following appendices were submitted with the report:

Appendix A - Animal Licensing Policy as used for the consultation exercise;
Appendix B - Full copies of all consultation responses, including a summary of representations, officer comments and actions taken.

Appendix C - Final proposed Animal Licensing Policy, incorporating amendments resulting from the public consultation exercise.

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer explained that the legislation regarding animal welfare was not adoptive, it was a statutory duty which applied to all local authorities. He added that the legislation stated contained phrases such as the Local Authority "may grant" and "subject to conditions as may be specified", and as such was subjective in its implementation.

In terms of the need for a policy, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer advised that, to date, the Council had a set of conditions that had not been considered by Members and implementation had been at the discretion of officers. It was clear that the policy should be determined by Members, with officers undertaking the administration and enforcement. Without a clear policy for such a subjective issue, the Council could be at risk of challenge over consistency or the reasoning of an officer.

In respect of the timing of the policy, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer stated that it had arisen from the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which introduced new licensing principles, including "five freedoms". These needed to be reflected in the Council's approach to animal licensing matters. The Act provided for all current Acts to be abolished and incorporated under this Act, with prescribed Government conditions – this could well be based on National Guidance, and so the Council was preparing in advance.

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer advised that the conditions proposed in the policy had been drafted on the basis of current national guidelines from professional bodies with experience in the field of animal welfare. He explained that these would only be guidelines, and that the policy would not strictly enforce all guidelines it allowed, as it had been recognised that flexibility was required in order to judge each matter on a case by case basis. He commented that rigid enforcement of a policy without consideration for individual circumstances would expose Council to risk of challenge for abdicating power ie. it was not exercising the subjectivity the Act allowed. He added that the guidelines had been in existence for some considerable time, but were periodically reviewed.

In relation to other local authorities, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer stated that there had been a consistent application across the country. However, should local authorities not act, then there was the possibility that the Government would impose the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Various local authorities were monitoring the progress of the proposed NHDC policy, and so the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer considered it would be preferable to lead on the policy rather than to follow.

With regard to the public consultation exercise, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer reported that the consultation period had been extended to take account of as many representations as possible, and he stated that full copies of all responses were included as an appendix to the report. In addition, a meeting to discuss the policy had been held, to which all animal boarding establishment owners had been invited, and which many of them attended. Visits had also been made by the Licensing and Enforcement Manager and Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer to a number of the establishments.

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer explained that the policy contained a proposal based on a model by which the London Borough of Harrow had safeguarded those existing establishments which failed to meet precisely the requirements of the policy. This provided these owners with an exception to the policy for the lifetime of them owning the business, but required them to carry out works to bring the establishment up to the necessary standard before selling it on. A key principle to this approach was that no existing establishment should cease trading and that a phased approach to improvement should be introduced. All existing establishments provided an excellent standard of care and no complaints had been logged with the Council. All new establishments must meet new standards, as all existing would either meet them when the licence changed hands or would cease trading.

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer explained that the "Harrow exemption" referred to the size of the units occupied by the animals. Other matters where the standards were not adhered to in existing establishments (such as sneeze barriers, impervious concrete bases, etc.) could be permitted under Section 9.2 of the proposed policy, which provided for officer discretion in such matters. On the question of home boarding, the Committee was advised that the policy sought to identify and licence such activity, but acknowledged that it would be difficult to locate and prove.

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer stressed that no boarding establishments would need to cease trading as a result of the policy, and that existing licence holders could plan now for the future when they looked to sell on the business, either by gradually upgrading the facility or by making alternative arrangements.

In respect of pet shops, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer advised that he was aware of objections from the Pet Care Trust against the proposed ban on the sale of puppies and kittens, and from the Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association against the proposed ban on reptiles. The Committee noted that these proposed bans were based on the professional opinion of the Animal Welfare Officer and that, after hearing the speakers, the Chairman may wish to ask the Animal Welfare Officer to explain his logic behind the proposed ban. The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer added that the Committee had yet to hear the arguments, and that officers may well wish to amend their position on this matter having heard the presentations.

In relation to riding establishments, zoos and dog breeding establishments, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer confirmed that no issues had been raised during the consultation period.

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer referred to two matters in respect of the consultation exercise. The first concerned "Pets at Home" – the former manageress of their Letchworth Store had raised no objections to the policy when consulted, but her successor had referred the matter to their Head Office, who had raised objections and had sent a speaker (Mr Scott) to address the Committee. The second concerned the Pet Care Trust – the consultation documentation had, in error, been sent to the wrong address, and hence the Trust had been excluded from the consultation. Accordingly, the Trust had also sent a speaker (Ms Nunn) to address the Committee.

In conclusion, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer acknowledged that this whole matter was an emotive issue, but could not be avoided any longer. There was no intention of any existing establishment having to cease trading and the proposed policy would ensure this was the case. Major concessions had been made on boarding establishments to exempt the existing establishments from size requirements, and

other minor issues could be dealt with by way of the officer case by case discretion (Para 9.2 of the policy). He appreciated the need to resolve the pet shop issues, about which he had just become aware, but considered that should these be resolved then he believed that the Policy safeguarded the Council, gave clear directions to the officers, met the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and prepared the Council for any enforced changes in the future, whilst safeguarding existing businesses. Subject to any amendments the Committee deemed appropriate, he hoped the policy could be referred to Cabinet with a recommendation for adoption.

Public Participation

(i) Mr Barry Huffer (Animal Boarding Establishment Owner)

Mr Huffer explained that he was representing 6 animal boarding establishments, who had formed themselves into a group following the issue of the public consultation on the proposed policy. He stated that the group did not disagree with the objectives of the policy, which had at its core the welfare of the animals. However, to employ the policy rigidly could lead to the closure of many of the establishments, as many had been constructed prior to currently proposed guidelines. To comply rigidly would require substantial re-building of the establishments, at considerable cost, and for which planning permission would be required.

Mr Huffer stated that most establishments would struggle to afford such re-building projects, as the cattery/kennel was their chief source of income. The officers had realised the predicament of current owners, and had suggested in the policy that an exemption to the standards be provided for existing owners, but that they would be required to upgrade the premises either prior to selling it on to a new owner or making the new owner aware that they would need to carry out the upgrading work.

Mr Huffer asked the Committee to consider the adoption of a transitional period of 5 years from the selling on of an establishment, during which the new owners would be required to upgrade the facility to the required standard. He therefore asked the Committee to adopt the policy, in principle, subject to officers working with the existing owners to develop a robust set of rules for the running of the establishments and the standards to be applied.

(ii) Statement from Mr Eymor (Animal Boarding Establishment Owner)

The Solicitor read out the following statement from Mr Eymor:

"I would like to say that we at Country Boarding Kennels and Cattery are not against the guidelines, but they are only guidelines and therefore flexibility in interpretation should be paramount to any policy adopted by the Licensing Committee.

To fix a policy that ties the hands of the person responsible for enforcing the policy (if adopted) could result in some businesses being forced to close down. I realise that this is not the intention of the Council, but what guarantees can be given, at least to enable those businesses where the owners might wish to sell as ongoing businesses to sell them without incurring too much of a financial loss. Prospective new purchasers may be in a better financial position to upgrade and maintain the premises.

We employ three full-time staff throughout the year and we need customers just like any other business to survive and move forward. Rewards are not that great when you look at the hours we all put in to care for animals. We are rapidly approaching retirement age and our plan was to sell our business in the next one or two years. Like most businesses we have noticed a downturn in our occupancy levels and we continue to be squeezed by rising costs. Our business rates have gone up by 2.5% for 2010. They now stand at £10,500 per year. To meet the policy guidelines will cause us severe financial problems and could result in us having to at best sell and at worst close our business thereby making three people redundant.

We would prefer the option to sell but this could pose a problem if the new policy did not take into account a flexible approach to meeting the guidelines for any potential purchasers of our business. At the point of any sale of the business, the new owner should be able to honour any future bookings. We currently have bookings for next summer and therefore if any potential new owners were refused a licence after this policy is adopted where would we stand with regard to broken contracts?

I would therefore like the committee to consider a clause under "Existing Licence Holder". This would give any potential new owner the opportunity to discuss with the licensing authority on a case by case basis, how best to achieve the goals as laid down by the policy and the guidelines contained therein. This would also mean a realistic time limit would have to be set to allow new owners to meet the requirements of the licensing authority. I would consider 5 years would be a realistic timescale from the date of selling our business. If you could not see your way to including this option in the policy it could mean we would never be able to sell our business as a going concern. I therefore ask that careful consideration be given to this fact or the council may inadvertently cause this establishment to close and possibly others in the area, which would not be in the best interests for animal care in North Herts District".

(iii) Mr Roger Fletcher (Animal Boarding Establishment Owner)

Mr Fletcher advised that, as the owner of an animal boarding establishment, he had an expectation to be able to profit from his labours. The costs implications of having to comply with bringing his property up to standards could remove this expectation.

Mr Fletcher considered that a one fit solution for all establishments was inappropriate, and likened the situation to one of choosing a hotel. They should all be of a basic standards, but after that it would be a matter of choice for the customer as to whether or not they required an enhanced level of accommodation – why should this be any different for customers wishing to select an animal boarding establishment? He felt that all of the establishments in North Herts already operated to the highest standards, and with a great deal of responsibility towards the animals in their care.

(iv) Ms M. Nyrvana-Jones (Animal Boarding Establishment Owner)

Ms Nyrvana-Jones supported the previous speakers and added that animal boarding establishments would be further devalued should the policy be adopted in its present form. If a property failed to comply with the size requirements by a matter of inches, then it was unrealistic to expect the owner to carry out the necessary re-building works purely to comply with the defined standards.

(v) Mr Chris Newman (Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association)

Mr Newman advised that he was a consultant to the Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association, position he had held for the past 5 years. His unpaid job was as Chairman of the Federation of British Herpetologists, which represented private keepers of reptiles and amphibians, a position he had held for the past 10 years.

Mr Newman stated that he had kept reptiles since the age of 5, a total of 45 years. He had been involved with the Animal Welfare Act 2006 since its inception – he had chaired the Government Working Group on Pet Fairs/Shows, and had also served on the Pet Vending Group, the group that had endeavoured to define "welfare". Additionally, he served on many governmental and non-governmental committees that dealt with reptile related issues, be those welfare or conservation related.

Mr Newman was surprised, and not a little disappointed, that a forward thinking and progressive body such as North Hertfordshire District Council should come forward with such an ill-considered and outdated proposal as to prohibit pet shops to sell reptiles – he would question whether the Council even had the legal powers to do so. He added that, should the Council choose to enact the proposed ban on the sale of reptiles through pet shops, the decision would be challengeable by means of Judicial Review.

He had no doubt that such a challenge would be made, and had no doubt as to its outcome.

Mr Newman considered that the proposal to ban sales was a decision not based on science, or even the best available evidence. He could only conclude that it was based on prejudice or discrimination – neither of which were acceptable in a modern society. Reptiles had been the fastest growing sector of the pet industry for the past two decades. He had provided Members with a fact sheet on this matter, but highlighted the paragraph taken from a report published in 2003 by the Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC), the formal advisor to the Government on animal welfare matters:

“.....it may be easier to keep some non-domesticated species to high welfare standards than some that are domesticated. Thus, meeting all the requirements – space, dietary, social, thermal, and so on – of a small, hardy, reptile may be more readily achievable for many people than adequately fulfilling all the needs of some breeds of dog.”

Mr Newman advised that it was very important when choosing a pet that the prospective owner able to make an informed choice as to suitability of species. Reptiles were the first choice for many families with allergy sufferers, and also for those people who worked or were absent from home for periods of time which would make mammals or birds unsuitable as pets. Increasingly, reptiles were also the choice for pet owners who cared for the environment and native ecology, both of which suffered the ravages of what were perceived as more domesticated pets, such as cats and dogs.

Mr Newman thought it would be totally inappropriate, not to say highly discriminatory, to ban sales of animals which were the first choice for the responsible and well informed pet keeper, and which was reflected in the extremely low numbers of these animals which fell into the hands of rescue centres.

Mr Newman could not help wondering if he was seeing the tip of the iceberg, and that future plans would be drawn up to ban the sale of all pets in North Hertfordshire. On this occasion, he hoped that common sense would prevail, and pet keepers would be able to continue to make properly informed decisions as to the animals they were permitted to purchase, whatever those animals might be.

(vi) Mr Peter Scott (on behalf of “Pets at Home”)

Mr Scott informed the Committee that he was a qualified veterinary surgeon, who provided advice to “Pets at Home”. He, too, had served on a number of DEFRA committees relating to animal welfare matters.

Mr Scott was puzzled by what seemed to be arbitrary process of associating reptiles with cats and dogs. Pets at Home had spent a considerable amount of time and resources over the past 3 to 4 years in developing a responsible approach to the sale of reptiles as pets. He made the following additional points:

- The sourcing of species would be captive bred only, the majority in the UK, and all suppliers would be inspected by veterinary surgeons;
- Specially designed housing for the reptiles would be in each Pets at Home store;, both for display in store and retail purposes;
- Appropriate food supplements would be on sale throughout the stores to enable animals to grow safely to adulthood; and
- Staff would be fully trained, and comprehensive support material would be provided;

Mr Scott considered that there were no welfare grounds on which to support a ban on the sale of reptiles. In fact, the opposite was suggested, as demonstrated by the quote from the CAWC report highlighted by the previous speaker.

In summary, Mr Scott stated that the consultation was carried out poorly, and the outcome seemed arbitrary, with little scientific founding. He posed the question “Under which regulatory power did North Herts feel that it had the authority to ban the sale of reptiles in its area?”

(vii) Ms Janet Nunn (on behalf of the Pet Care Trust)

Ms Nunn advised that she was the Chief Executive of the Pet Care Trust, a body concerned with the promotion of responsible pet ownership.

Ms Nunn commended the involvement of elected Members in the process of policy development, but referred to the difficulties she had in supporting the proposed NHDC Animal Policy, due to inconsistencies, factual inaccuracies, and inaccuracies of substance.

In terms of inconsistencies, Ms Nunn felt that the policy appeared to have been drafted by two individuals. She queried whether the policy had been checked by someone competent in law, as the Animal Welfare Act 2006 contained five “needs” and not the five “freedoms” referred to in the report. In terms of substance, she stated that the proposed conditions for dog boarding establishments had no indication of how many animals were expected to share accommodation.

Ms Nunn stated that the primary legislation did not venture into the sale of puppies, kittens and reptiles, as it was recognised that, provided they were operated by responsible and competent individuals, pet shops should be free to care for and sell such pets. Currently, only 2% of pet shops sold puppies, and 10% kittens, but provided the owners of these premises were responsible, their sale should not be banned. In respect of the sale of reptiles, this was now “mainstream” accounting for over 25% of all sales of pets.

Ms Nunn commented that an estimated 48,000 residents of North Hertfordshire owned pets – why did the Council expect its residents to venture outside of its own area to source pets from other parts of the country? She asked Members to reject the policy and carry out a fresh consultation exercise, and suggested that the Council adopted the agreed Local Government Association conditions for Pet Shops and Boarding Establishments drawn up in the Mid 1990s.

Officer comment and debate

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer re-iterated his earlier comment that Paragraph 9.2 of the policy provided for officer discretion regarding the standards of existing animal boarding establishments, and he perceived that should the premises fail to meet the size standards by a matter of inches then this officer discretion would still apply to any new owners.

In respect of the information provided regarding the sale of reptiles, puppies and kittens, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer commented that, in the light of the presentations made earlier in the meeting, he would be prepared to remove from the policy the ban on such sales. In so doing, he recognised that appropriate conditions need to be added into the policy to safeguard the care of these animals whilst in pet shops.

In response to a Member’s question, the Animal Welfare Officer advised that the reason he had proposed a ban on the sale of puppies and kittens was that, historically in North Hertfordshire, there had always been a supply of animals that required re-housing, in which case there was a lesser need to sell animals in pet shops. However, in the light of provided by the speakers regarding the sale of puppies, kittens and reptiles, he supported the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer’s proposal that the ban be removed from the policy.

At the request of a Member, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer clarified the details of the consultation exercise carried out on the policy.

In respect of animal boarding establishments, Members felt that some time period to allow them to be brought up to standard after they were sold on was probably needed. They also discussed the possibility of “grandfather” rights, to enable an existing establishment to remain in hands of the same family without the need to upgrade as a new owner/establishment.

In further debating the matter, the Committee considered that the policy could be much more robust should the recommendations of the expert speakers regarding the sale of puppies, kittens and reptiles be included. It was therefore felt that more time was needed to refine the policy to reflect the view of these speakers, before it could be recommended to Cabinet for approval. It was noted that when the policy was re-submitted to the Committee, Members would also need to determine the outstanding issues relating to animal boarding establishments referred to throughout the meeting.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED: That the proposed Animal Licensing Policy, as attached at Appendix C to the report, be deferred to allow officers further time to develop the policy, in consultation with the expert speakers who had addressed the meeting, with a view to the consideration of a revised policy by the Committee at a meeting in early January 2010, for onward referral to Cabinet.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that a more robust policy is developed for onward referral to Cabinet.

7. GAMBLING ACT 2005 – STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES 2010

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer presented a report seeking the Committee’s endorsement of the Council’s proposed Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Principles 2010, prior to consideration of the Policy by the Council on 3 December 2009. The following appendices were submitted with the report:

Appendix A - Current Statement of Principles 2007;

Appendix B - Proposed Statement of Principles 2010 as used for the consultation exercise;

Appendix C - Summary of comments received during Consultation, including recommendations;

Appendix D – Final Statement of Principles 2010.

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer advised that the Gambling Policy was a statutory policy, which was required to be reviewed every 3 years. The format of the proposed policy had been revised to reflect the national template issued by LACORS (Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services), but the Committee was advised that the wording remained unchanged, with the following exceptions:

- (i) the addition of amendments to reflect the Guidance issued by the Gambling Commission in May 2009 regarding split premises; and
- (ii) various wording amendments suggested by the Solicitor.

In respect of the Table of Delegations appended to the policy, the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer commented that, when the Council had last adopted the policy in 2006, the Committee had considered that the cancellation of licensed premises gaming machine permits and applications for new licensed premises gaming machine permits for 3 or more machines were matters which should be determined by a Licensing and Appeals Sub-Committee. However, the LACORS template showed both of these matters as being determined by officers.

The Committee was content to support the adoption of the LACORS-recommended Table of Delegations, on the basis that, under the Council’s Scheme of Delegations, officers were always at liberty to refer a delegated decision to any of their respective Committees rather than make the decision themselves.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Statement of Principles 2010 in respect of the Gambling Act 2005, as attached at Appendix D to the report, and incorporating the results of the public consultation exercise, be supported.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the proposed Statement of Principles 2010 in respect of the Gambling Act 2005, as attached at Appendix D to the report, be adopted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure publication of a Statement of Licensing Principles every three years, in accordance with Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005. A new Statement must be published by 2nd January 2010.

8. LICENSING ACT 2003 – NEW MINOR VARIATIONS PROCESS

The Solicitor presented a report of the Acting Corporate Legal Manager advising the Committee on the recent changes to the Licensing Act 2003, and to seek a decision on whether or not the determination of a minor variation application could be delegated to licensing officers, as recommended by the Government. The following appendices were submitted with the report:

Appendix A – The Legislative Reform (Minor Variations to Premises Licenses and Club Premises Certificates) Order 2009;

Appendix B – Guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 July 2009.

The Solicitor referred to a number of examples of “minor variations”, as set out in the report. He commented that the Council’s Constitution did not allow for such a change and that, should any minor variations had been submitted since the scheme came into operation, then these would have been treated as major variation applications and put before a Licensing and Appeals Sub-Committee. However, the Solicitor now sought to amend the Constitution, and recommended that the Committee should delegate its powers to determine minor variation applications to officers.

The Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer advised that interested parties and Responsible Authorities were able to make representations on minor variation applications, but that it would be a matter for officers to determine whether or not these raised matters which had a significant impact on the licensing objectives. If so, the application would be refused, in which case the applicant would need to submit a “full” variation application, as there was no right of appeal against refusal of a minor variation application.

The Committee noted, based on research carried out by the Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer, that it had been estimated that there was likely to be in the region of 4 or 5 minor variation applications per year.

RESOLVED: That Licensing Officers be granted delegated authority to determine minor variation applications under the Licensing Act 2003.

REASON FOR DECISION: To give effect to the Orders made by the Government under the Legislative Reform Act 2006 in relation to the Licensing Act 2003.

The meeting closed at 9.55pm.

.....
Chairman