

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LICENSING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON TUESDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER, 2021 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: (Chair), Councillor Daniel Allen (Vice-Chair), David Barnard, Jim McNally, Gerald Morris, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Richard Thake and Tom Tyson*

In Attendance:

Steve Cobb (Licensing Manager) and Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community)

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting approximately XX members of the public, including registered speakers.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1:11

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Albert, Jean Green, Mike Rice and Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg.

2 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 1:33

(1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;

(2) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 1:42

There was no other business notified.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 1:43

There was no public participation at this meeting.

5 LICENSING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

Audio Recording – 4:24

The Licensing Manager presented the Licensing Service Annual Report 2020-2021 and drew attention to the following:

- Annual licensed premises at December last year were given a 6 month extension owing to the economic impact of COVID-19 and the inability to conduct inspections
- Taxi traders were given three opportunities to apply for COVID-19 relief funding which was well received
- Ways of working were adapted to accommodate the public health situation, and many of these adaptations were well received by license holders and have been continued;
- Customer engagement has been a focus of the last 12 months;
- The team had taken on an apprentice who was making improvements on the Licensing Team's website and the resources they provide;
- Inspections procedure was reviewed and there were now more categories of inspection
- Staff new to licensing less than 12 months ago were undertaking continual training and most of the team now held a formal licensing qualification, which would lead to cost savings;
- Apprentices in the Licensing team had been a valuable asset;
- Pre-application advice as a source of income generation was in development which would be of benefit to customers as well as the Council;
- The team was investigating customer engagement and channel shift to develop online means of access for customers.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor David Barnard
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Tom Tyson

In response to questions the Licensing Manager advised:

- Statutory functions can only be charged at cost;
- Pre-application advice as a non-statutory function could be set at a reasonable fee but could be used to develop income for the Council;
- Personal license qualifications and accreditation as a qualification provider could be investigated;
- At this stage some documents could not be received online, such as DBS certifications or driving licenses; the right to work checks required by central government were being reviewed now that face to face appointments were a possibility;
- Tax checks were now also a requirement and certain documents would have to be seen in person
- Fees were two part; a standard fee for any premises and for events of more than 5,000 people there were additional fees applicable;
- Under the Licensing Act the additional fees able to be charged intended to cover officer and Committee work ahead of a licensing determination were generous;
- Logs of officer time were kept to ensure adequate recompense was made;
- There were four full time members of staff in the Licensing team; it had been a difficult 12 months to judge but as normality returned there were now the right number and the right people in the team to take the service forward;
- In 2018/19 the team was stretched as there were only 4 offices working in the team;
- In October and November a number of animal inspections had taken place in preparation for renewals;
- When the first draft event management plans were received a summary would be circulated to ward members to ensure that local communities were made aware of events planned locally;

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- The government had extended....for 30 September 2022 and the relevant Minister had mentioned it may become a permanent district Council function;
- Work was ongoing in the Licensing Team to update their pages on the new Council website.

On the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report 2021-2022 be noted.

6 DRAFT STATEMENT OF GAMBLING LICENSING PRINCIPLES 2022-2025

Audio Recording – 36:37

The Licensing Manager presented the report entitled Draft Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles 2022-2025 along with Appendices A and B –

He drew attention to the following:

- The policy could only be adopted by Full Council but as the specialist committee it was presented here to consult on the views of the Committee
- License conditions and awards were limited by the statutory licensing objectives but the policy included sections where the authority could encourage positive developments including those around the environment;
- The Policy also works towards helping customers on a multi-agency basis to resolve issues outside of the remit of the licensing objectives;
- There were not a large number of gambling premises in the District.

Councillor Jim McNally proposed, Councillor Richard Thake seconded and it was:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That Council adopt the policy as attached at Appendix A.

The meeting closed at 8.34 pm

Chair