

MINUTE

of

EAST RENFREWSHIRE LOCAL LICENSING FORUM

Minute of meeting held at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock, on 12 December 2017.

Present:

Local Residents

Caroline Church
Ken Hunter
Frank McGee
Helena Shanks

Health/Social Work

Candy Millard
Janice Thomson

Licensees

Licensing Standards Officer

Dominic McMahon

Strathclyde Police

Dominic McMahon presided

Attending:

Councillor Angela Convery, Chair East Renfrewshire Licensing Board; Eamonn Daly, Clerk to the Forum; and Jacqui McCusker, Senior Solicitor.

Also Attending:

Sean McCollum, Policy and Development Co-ordinator, Alcohol Focus Scotland

Apologies:

Bruce Tulloch

ACTION BY

1. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The meeting considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 13 December 2017.

2. MATTERS ARISING

In response to a question from Mr McGee on the number of campus cops, Mr McMahon undertook to confirm the numbers. LSO

Further, in response to questions on training for forum members, Mr McMahon having acknowledged that this was an area of concern, Mr McCollum explained that he was developing developed training and development sessions for licensing forum members. It had been intended to trial these with the Edinburgh Licensing Forum but this had not yet happened. He intimated that he would note that the licensing forum would be interested in taking part in any training that was being arranged.

This was welcomed, Mr McGee stating that it appeared unusual that there was no formal training requirement for forum members whilst licensing board members and licensees were both required to undergo training.

With regard to internet sales (Item 7 refers) Mr McMahon confirmed that he would get updates on whether licences had been granted to Amazon by Inverclyde and Fife Licensing Boards for their distribution centres in those areas. LSO

With regard to minimum pricing (Item 6 refers), Mr McMahon reported that it was intended to provide a detailed update to the forum in March 2018, with minimum pricing due to take effect from 1 May 2018. LSO

Mr McMahon having explained the position regarding licensee membership of the forum, in response to questions from Mr McGee on complaint numbers (Item 8 refers), he highlighted that the main reason was mostly due to the number of charity or community organisations that applied for licences where the office bearers did not undergo the same levels of training as premises or personal licence holders and so were less aware of the licence requirements. He highlighted that a lot of training had taken place with these groups and there had been improvements. However the nature of the groups was such that there was often a turnover in office bearers with inexperienced individuals taking on the responsibility of applying for licences and being responsible for running events. To address this issue, an information evening for new office bearers of local groups that may apply for licences was being considered.

He also highlighted the very low cost of an occasional licence (£10) which was nowhere near the cost of processing the application. This had been raised with the Scottish Government.

The forum noted the information.

3. POLICE SCOTLAND ANNUAL REPORT 1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017

The forum considered the police annual report for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, prepared in accordance with Section 12A of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005.

Having provided an overview of the licensing service within Police Scotland and more detailed local information in relation to policing within the licensing board area, the report set out the local policing priorities for the Grater Glasgow Division, which included the East Renfrewshire area.

Thereafter, the report provided more detailed information in relation to the operation of the 2005 Act after which it provided summary details across the spectrum of licensing matters.

The report also provided further information regarding the work carried out by the police in relation to the prevention of the sale or supply of alcohol to children or young persons.

Reference was also made to some of the work being carried out in relation to serious and organised crime where licensed premises were often used as a "front" for illegal activities, and concluded with some of the proposed police activity for the year ahead.

Following discussion the forum noted the report.

4. COMPLAINTS

The forum considered a report by the Licensing Standards Officer providing general information in relation to the number and types of complaint received over the period January to December 2017.

It was noted that a total number of 182 complaints had been received, the greatest number being in respect of occasional licences where 71 complaints had been received.

Commenting on the report, Mr McMahon highlighted the sharp increase in the number of occasional licences applied for. He explained that there tended to be repeated themes to the majority of complaints, these being in relation to noise, disorder and dispersal from premises. He highlighted that registered clubs often changed their committees around March/April in each year and this brought challenges with new inexperienced committee members applying for licences. He also provided some broad details about some of the other types of complaints that had been dealt with during the year.

In response to questions it was explained that whilst the complaints report considered by the forum did not go to the Council the Chair of the Board had attended forum meetings in the past and so was aware of the issues. Details of actions that were taken in the event repeated complaints were made about the same premises/licensee how Mr McMahon were also outlined, which could ultimately see the issue of a compliance notice. He also confirmed that when occasional licences were being considered by the Clerk to the Board, details of any issues that had arisen out of previous licence applications were provided.

The forum noted the report.

5. ALCOHOL RELATED HARM IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE

The forum received a presentation from Janice Thomson, Lead Planning Officer, on Alcohol-Related Crime in East Renfrewshire.

By way of background, Ms Thomson explained her role within the Health and Social Care Partnership, and the role of the forum in supporting the licensing board in dealing with overprovision in the area.

She explained that in looking at the issue multiple pieces of evidence had been considered and that whilst this factual data could be presented and considered it was much more difficult to calculate the impact on families and communities.

Having played a short video clip of Dr Evelyn Gillan, former CEO of Alcohol Focus Scotland, and once of the leading campaigners for the introduction of minimum pricing, Ms Thomson spoke further on issues and changing factors over the previous decade. She highlighted that NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde had appointed a new Director of Public Health Medicine some 11 years previously. At that time the key public health issues were identified as smoking, alcohol and obesity. These remained unchanged.

Ms Thomson referred to a presentation on the subject she had made 10 years ago and that much of what she said at the time still applied.

She highlighted the development of a local strategy to tackle alcohol related harm which was consistently held up by the Scottish Government as an example of good practice. Other examples were the introduction of alcohol brief interventions and consistently positive feedback on services for young people.

Ms Thomson then provided some national statistical information in relation to alcohol related harm with more local information also being provided which showed that when compared to other council areas, East Renfrewshire was 10th with East Dunbartonshire, with a similar demographic, being first. Locally, it was reported that Barrhead had the highest concentration of licensed premises, whilst alcohol related harm was highest in those areas with highest levels of deprivation.

Ms Thomson concluded her presentation by referring to the progress that had been made but also to the challenges that still needed to be addressed moving forward.

Discussion followed in the course of which Councillor Convery expressed alarm at the figures in relation to those areas of deprivation.

Referring to the introduction of minimum unit pricing, Mr McGee queried whether or not any thought had been given to reducing alcohol strength of products.

In reply Ms Thomson highlighted that a number of companies were now producing lower strength beers but that ultimately that was a commercial decision. In addition Mr McCollum explained that studies showed that

price was one of the most effective ways in which to reduce alcohol use and associated harm. He also referred to the ongoing Scottish Government consultation on what the minimum unit price should be set at.

Mr McMahon having thanked Ms Thomson for her presentation, the forum noted the information.

6. LICENSING POLICY STATEMENTS – BEST PRACTICE

Mr McMahon introduced Sean McCollum, Policy and Development Co-ordinator, Alcohol Focus Scotland, who was attending the meeting to make a presentation on Best Practice in the development of licensing policy statements.

Thanking the forum for the opportunity to address them, Mr McCollum referred to the requirements for licensing boards to have their new policy statements ready by November 2018, and these would set the framework for decisions taken by licensing boards thereafter.

Having provided some statistical information showing that 17% more alcohol was purchased in Scotland compared to England and Wales, Mr McCollum referred to the 2009 “whole population approach” that had been adopted which stated that if availability, price and marketing of alcohol could be impacted, this could depress consumption levels.

Mr McCollum also referred to a series of evaluation reports carried out between 2010 and 2016 which suggested a lack of accountability and transparency in the licensing system.

He highlighted that one of the aims of the 2005 Act had been to help control alcohol availability but this had not been achieved with 96% of all new applications each year being approved and a year on year increase in the number of licensed premises for the previous 6 years.

It was noted that 73% of premises licences related to off sales/supermarkets and that between 2012 and 2016 an additional 254 off sales premises had opened in Scotland.

He referred to changing business models such as online sales, and to the trend for higher numbers of alcohol outlets in areas of deprivation.

Mr McCollum referred to the duty of licensing boards to promote the licensing objectives suggesting that a 96% licence approval rate suggested an inconsistency between boards’ obligations and their actions.

On behalf of the forum Mr McMahon thanked Mr McCollum for his presentation.

7. LICENSING POLICY STATEMENTS – THE FORUM’S ROLE

Mr McMahon made a presentation to the forum on its role in the development of the licensing boards’s policy statement.

Having noted that very few licensing boards had started to work on their new policy statements, Mr McMahon referred to the obligation on licensing boards to respond to any comments made by their respective licensing forums.

He referred to the history of comments made by the forum in the past and sought views on whether the forum should offer support and comment to the board in the development of its draft policy or simply wait until the draft policy had been prepared and offer comment at that time. The general view was that the forum should be proactive and offer comments at an early stage in the process. In this regard issues around membership levels of the forum were discussed and Ms Millard suggested there may be some merit in approaching the locality planning groups set up as part of the development of local outcome improvement plans.

Mr McMahon also commented on legislative changes that would allow East Renfrewshire to be considered as a single licensing area and to the importance of any comments being made to the licensing board being based on sound evidence.

Mrs Church referred to comments made by the forum to the board previously and to the length of time it had taken for a reply to be received and asked that when comments were submitted in future the Clerk to the Board be asked for a timeous response.

The forum noted the presentation.

8. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2018

The forum considered and approved a report by the Clerk on proposed meeting dates for 2018.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 13 March 2018 at 7pm in the Council Chamber.