

EAST RENFREWSHIRE LOCAL LICENSING FORUM12 June 2018Report by ClerkESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL LICENSING FORUM**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To advise the forum of the latest position in respect of efforts to establish a National Licensing Forum.

**REPORT**

2. At the meeting of the Forum on 20 March the forum considered a letter received from the Convener of the East Ayrshire Local Licensing Forum, seeking support for the creation of a national forum, and asking local licensing forums around the country to contact their local MSPs seeking their support for the establishment of this ad asking them to lobby Scottish Ministers.

3. Following discussion the forum agreed to support the request from East Ayrshire Licensing Forum, and that I write to Jackson Carlaw MSP seeking his support.

4. I subsequently wrote to Mr Carlaw setting out the background to the establishment of local licensing forums, explaining that they were in operation across the country with varying degrees of success, and highlighting that whilst the legislation established forums at a local level, no provisions were introduced for the establishment of a national body. As such licensing forums tended to operate in isolation. I further explained that more recently, to try and address this perceived deficit, licensing forums in the West of Scotland had joined together informally to establish the West of Scotland Joint Licensing Forum, providing details of the purpose of the Joint Forum.

5. It was also highlighted that one of the issues raised at joint meetings had been the absence of a national forum and whether or not there is any appetite for the creation of such a body. To establish this, all 32 licensing authorities in Scotland had been canvassed were canvassed. 22 responses were received with 18, including the East Renfrewshire Licensing Forum, supporting the establishment of a national body. In light of these results, forums had been invited to contact local MSPs to make them aware of the support for the establishment of a national forum, and to seek support for the creation of such a body by lobbying the relevant Scottish Ministers, in this case the Justice Secretary and the Health Secretary.

6. In his reply Mr Carlaw explained that he did not feel this was something he could support at this time. He recognised the role of the forum locally and that there was some confusion over the role of the forum and its ability to intervene in the operation of the Board.

7. He further highlighted that there is no national licensing board and so was unclear with whom a national licensing forum would interact? Given this he was not sure what purpose Ministers would see in engaging, as ultimately it would still be for local forums to liaise with local boards.

8. In conclusion he expressed concern therefore, that this may create an unnecessary additional but essentially un-empowered body which, depending on actual participation, may not be representative of local circumstances which was the point of the local forums.

9. Mr Carlaw's comments have been fed back to the Convener of the East Ayrshire Licensing Forum.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

10. That the forum note the report

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