

LICENSING COMMITTEE

7 March 2024

Present: Councillor R Wenham (Chair)
Councillor M Hofman (Vice-Chair)
Councillors D Allen-Williamson, M Devonish, S Feldman,
A Grimston, P Hannon, L Nembhard MBE, C Saunders, G Saffery,
M Turmaine, S Trebar and D Watling

Officers: Community Protection Lead
Licensing Manager
Environmental Health Manager (Commercial)
Senior Solicitor
Democratic Services Officer (LM)

15 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Osborn.

No apologies had been received from Councillor Smith.

16 Disclosure of interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

17 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11 January 2024 were submitted and signed.

18 Licensing Sub-Committee minutes and update

The committee received an update on the Licensing Sub-Committee hearings which had taken place since March 2023.

The minutes of the meetings held on the following dates were agreed:

- 21 July 2023 (Dunnings)

- 3 August 2023 (RS Food & Wine)
- 6 September 2023 (Diamond and Strings)
- 5 October 2023 (Expo Cash & Carry)
- 19 October 2023 (Valea Prahovei)
- 27 November 2023 (Tim Hortons)
- 4 January 2024 (RS Food & Wine)
- 19 January 2024 (Papa John's)
- 6 February 2024 (Woody Express)

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Review of Cumulative Impact Assessment under Statement of Licensing Policy 2023-2028

The committee received the report from the Licensing Manager, which detailed the results of the review of the Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA).

The Licensing Manager presented the report and referred the members to Section 5a of the Licensing Act. The details of the consultation and the responses received were outlined in the report and its appendices. The majority of responses were broadly in support of the proposed policy. The Police provided data showing that areas such as the Parade and High Street exhibited higher crime statistics in support of the CIA. Committee members were directed to Table 2 on page 6 for further detail on crime statistics.

Councillor Devonish sought clarification on residents' comments regarding lease agreements and late licensing, especially where leases were breached by the issuance of licences. The Licensing Manager responded that the Licensing Act 2003 did not consider planning considerations or lease agreements, which were deemed civil matters and not considered under the Act. He further clarified that planning legislation should not influence licensing decisions. The Environmental Health Manager emphasised that their reviews were based solely on the four licensing objectives, the only factors considered in their evaluations and decisions.

Councillor Hanon noted the previously low engagement levels in consultations and expressed pleasure at a tenfold increase in response to the CIA survey. He asked about improving community impact, considering data related to Pryzm, a now-closed nightclub. The Licensing Manager explained the CIA was reviewed every five years but could be assessed at any point, with each review starting a new cycle. He acknowledged shifts in crime focus and social dynamics post-COVID as contributing to evolving concerns.

Councillor Trebar raised concerns about the safety of women and girls, noting the intimidating atmosphere in certain areas mentioned in the responses. The

Community Protection Service Lead responded that violence against women and girls remained a priority, with recent associated crime figures with violence against women and girls significantly reduced in Watford. This was in part due to the partnership with the Police and projects.

Councillor Grimston raised concerns about rumours of Pryzm's reopening. The councillor questioned whether the community would like such establishments. In response, the Licensing Manager emphasised that all licensed venues were regulated consistently. They stressed the importance of supporting responsible business operations to promote economic growth. He added that each application would be reviewed against the four licensing objectives.

Finally, the Chair thanked Austen Young and Parminder Seyan, who had recently left the council, for their significant contributions to the Licensing team.

RESOLVED –

That having had regard to the consultation responses set out in appendix 2 the Committee recommends that the new Cumulative Impact Assessment, attached at appendix 1, be adopted.

Chair
Licensing Committee

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.25 pm