

LICENSING COMMITTEE

6 July 2023

Present: Councillors D Allen-Williamson, M Devonish, A Grimston,
L Nembhard, T Osborn, C Saunders, G Saffery, D Watling and
K Rodrigues

Officers: Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Environmental Health Manager (Commercial)
Senior Licensing Officer (AY)
Democratic Services Officer (LM)

1 **Election of a Chair**

As the Chair of the committee had been unexpectedly called away for a family emergency, and the Vice Chair had sent his apologies, a Chair was elected for the evening's proceedings.

RESOLVED –

That Councillor G Saffery be appointed as Chair for this meeting.

2 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Feldman, Hannon, Hofman, Trebar, Turmaine, Smith and Wenham

There was a change of membership for this meeting: Councillor Rodrigues replaced Councillor Hofman.

3 **Disclosure of interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

4 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12 January 2023 were submitted and signed.

Review of Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Licensing Policy

The Senior Licensing Officer introduced the report to the committee. The Statement of Licensing Policy (SLP) consultation process and timetable were outlined. He drew attention to the areas of the report that had been updated. Premises definitions needed revision due to increased applications and queries concerning remote alcohol sales during the Covid-19 pandemic. The suggestion was to categorise remote sales as a distinct use, separate from the definition of off-licences. Entertainment venues allowing ancillary alcohol sales experienced growth, prompting a proposal to expand their definition to include activities like escape rooms.

Policy LP2 concerning pavement licences was to be removed from the policy as pavement licences were governed by separate legislation and policy. Policy LP3 – Cumulative Impact Policy would be changed to eliminate assumptions of refusal, aligning with legislation that demanded an evaluation of applications on their individual merits.

In response to questions from members, the Senior Licensing Officer replied that no concrete data was available regarding the impact of entertainment-led businesses on alcohol consumption levels. However, there was an observable trend in trade magazines suggesting a shift towards activities driven by entertainment.

Councillor Grimston inquired about film certification, to which the Senior Licensing Officer responded that films could have been rated by either The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) or licensed by local authorities. The latter primarily applied to films produced by amateurs to be shown at local venues.

During the discussion, the remote sale of alcohol and its impact on the local areas were addressed. In response, the Senior Licensing Officer clarified that specific licences were issued for such premises, and a condition could be imposed to prohibit public access, requiring delivery drivers to collect at designated points. The matter of mopeds in Watford was also raised. While licensing could handle premises and activities conducted within them, any concerns regarding this issue were requested to be brought to their attention so that appropriate measures could be taken with the business owners. Noise complaints were advised to be directed to the Environmental Health Department. The Environmental Health Manager also mentioned other legal options, such as community protection warnings and notices could be used.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Licensing Committee agrees the timetable for the implementation of a new licensing policy by 19 November 2023 as set out in paragraph 6.3 and the approach to be taken with regards to the new policy
2. That the Licensing Committee agrees the focus of the public consultation, as set out in paragraphs 5.1 through 5.12.
3. That officers consult with the parties set out in paragraph 6.2 and report to the Licensing Committee at its meeting on 28 September 2023.

6 **Review of Sex Establishment Licensing Policy**

The Senior Licensing Officer introduced the report to the committee, highlighting the importance of having a policy in place that should undergo regular review. The current number of licensed sex establishments in Watford was 1 sexual entertainment venue and zero sex shops, with a single venue on Market Street. A consultation was held from the 1st to the 18th of June to review the policy. No significant amendments were deemed necessary, and in case of any concerns, a mechanism existed to review the licence. The consultation process involved various stakeholders, including an online survey, the police, the licence holder, and the central residents' association. Additionally, a consultation was conducted with Watford BID to consider the impact on the town's economy.

Regarding received responses, one response from the Police expressed satisfaction with maintaining the policy in place. Another reply was obtained via the online survey, but it remained anonymous and incomplete. However, the agent for the licensed establishment had confirmed to the Senior Licensing Officer that they had attempted to complete the survey and confirmed that they had no issue to be raised.

In response to a query from Councillor Devonish, the Senior Licensing Officer outlined the history of the number of establishments and that no applications had been refused. It was confirmed that there had been a sex shop and sexual entertainment venue on The Parade, but they had both subsequently closed, and each time the situation was utilised to review and modify the licensing numbers.

RESOLVED –

That the policy at appendix 2 be approved and adopted for three years, starting immediately upon the expiry of the current policy.

Chair
Licensing Committee

The Meeting started at 7.10 pm
and finished at 7.50 pm