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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE Town Hall, Main Road, Romford 27 February 2014 (7.30 - 8.20 pm)

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Peter Gardner (Chairman) , Melvin Wallace (Vice-Chair), Frederick Osborne and Pam Light

Labour Group Denis Breading

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Linda Trew, Keith Wells, Georgina Galpin, Brian Eagling and Linda Van den Hende.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

19 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 PRESENTATION ON THE LICENSING STRATEGY

The Committee received a presentation on the Licensing Strategy from the Public Protection, Licensing and Health and Safety Divisional Manager. This presentation was provided an opportunity for the Committee to be informed on how the reshaped Licensing Strategy would address issues that continued to be raised by Members.

The presentation highlighted what Members wanted from the Licensing Strategy/Policy

- Limit licenced premises to current levels in key areas where Members were of the opinion that the number of premises were high
- Keep businesses in business
- Reduce the adverse and expensive effects of excessive drinking on Police, Health and the Council

The presentation also detailed the following other key themes:

- Spread of off-licences
- Access to alcohol near schools and colleges
- Night-time economy concerns
- Support the Licensing Committee

The presentation outlined a step by step approach that had been developed to address the following issues that the strategy/policy would try to achieve:

Reduce age-restricted sales, particularly in the vicinity of schools and colleges

The Committee was informed that the approach would be to limit the sale of alcohol from premises within 400 metres of schools and colleges and along prime routes for walking school children.

Other measures would be to attempt to control the products offered for sale and on window displays at premises in the close proximity of schools and colleges, focussing on premises that persistently failed under-age test purchases carried out by Trading Standards. In addition, we would seek to prohibit the sale of alcohol before 11.00am from premises within 400 metres of schools and colleges.

The Committee noted that all these would be achieved either by Intelligence-led test purchase exercises, informed by Police or complaints received.

Consistency in approach to tackling problems associated with licensed premises

The Committee was informed that the aim would be for the Licensing Strategy, Licensing Policy and Drug and Alcohol Strategy to be consistent in their approach. It would be expected that the Director of Public Health and Licensing Team work closely together to ensure consistency across appropriate strategies and policies.

Control the availability of alcohol after pubs close to reduce anti-social behaviour

The Committee was informed that the aim would be to prohibit off-sales after 2300 hours for new applications and encourage existing off-licences to pull their closing hours back to 23.00 hours.

On issues relating to the control of street drinking, the presentation detailed that a review of crime and disorder hot spots would be considered by the Community Safety Partnership. This would lead to designated Public Place Orders being introduced where appropriate

Control cumulative impacts

The Committee was informed that the special policy would apply to all licensed premises in the existing areas of Romford and Hornchurch where a Cumulative Impact Zone currently existed in respect of premises restricted to on-sales only.

Applications in these areas would presume to be refused unless exceptional circumstances prevailed.

The special policy would be extended to other areas where there were demonstrable alcohol-related problems.

The Committee would be kept informed of the number and type of licensed premises in Romford and Hornchurch.

Well informed Licensing Sub-Committees

A general briefing on licensing as part of Members' Induction would be arranged following the elections.

A mandatory training of all Licensing Committee members on the Licensing Strategy, Licensing Policy, statutory guidance and other relevant matters would be organised before any such Member could seat on a sub-committee.

All Licensing Committee members would be kept up to date via diarised update meetings.

Responsible Authorities would have to provide evidence of their reasoning behind making a representation

A Licensing Sub-Committee would be provided with the correlation between

- (i) the number of licensed premises in the applicant premises' area with various offences &
- (ii) (ii) excessive alcohol consumption and crime

Effective use of data to inform interventions

Members were informed that the Community Safety Partnership would monitor crime statistics and their correlation with areas where there were licensed premises in order to devise and implement interventions if crime levels around licensed premises increased.

Licensing and planning regimes to be more joined-up

The Committee was informed that the approach was that a licencing application would only be granted within the extant of a planning permission, unless exceptional circumstances prevail

The Licensing Officer's report would provide the sub-committee with information on planning status as part of committee report.

Reduction in the level of drug use on licensed on premises

The presentation detailed that the approach would be to increase the number of drug itemiser tests per premises and carry out random drug dog searches.

The provision of drug awareness training for staff in pubs and clubs and a review of their DPS' drug policies.

Link the town centre banning scheme with substance misuse services by encouraging users to engage with services leading to a reduction in length of their ban

This would mean that the DAAT and Police would co-ordinate their activities to achieve an increased intelligence-led drug testing activities

Next Steps

The Committee was provided with a detailed schedule in moving the Strategy onward:

- Report to Leaders Briefing 5 March 2014
- Leader signs off Executive Decision
- Approved by Full Council – 26 March 2014
- 1st Draft New Statement of Licensing Policy - June 2014
- Working Party of Licensing Committee members to refine first draft. July 2014
- Seek approval to go to public consultation for Statement of Licensing Policy. Sept 2014
- Eight week consultation
- Final policy presented for approval by Licensing Committee. Nov 2014
- Final policy presented for approval by Full Council Dec 2014
- Policy implemented Jan/Feb 2015

The Committee Noted the presentation.

Chairman