

Licensing Committee

20 July 2004

7pm

Present:

Councillor Jean Christie (Chair)

Councillors: R Bowman
L K Croxton
W G Dyke
Mrs Ennis-Goatham
K Jones
G Lambton
P J McSweeney
R J E Parker
P Rayner
D Robinson
M Singh
H J Smith
R Stanford
R J R Target

Note: Councillors E Brook, Mrs B McGarrity and R G Smith were also in attendance

Mrs S A Whatmough, Head of Democratic Services
Mrs S Kilkie, Environmental Health Manager
Mr T Mortimer, Senior Licensing Officer
Mr N C Channon, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs S Hill, Democratic Services

Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Licensing Committee and introduced the Council's recently appointed Senior Licensing Officer, Mr Tony Mortimer.

1. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved that Councillor R J E Parker be appointed Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee for the 2004/05 municipal year.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Licensing Act 2003

Members received a presentation from the Environmental Health Manager and the Senior Licensing Officer on the Licensing Act 2003 and the impact it would have upon Gravesham Borough Council. The committee was apprised on the content of the Licensing Act 2003, the timetable and transitional arrangements and Gravesham's approach to the

implementation of the proposals. The aims of the Licensing Act were to make licensing laws more simple, transparent, flexible and accountable with the system linking into regeneration, tourism and community safety.

The four key licensing objectives would be:-

- The prevention of crime and disorder.
- Public safety.
- The protection of children from harm.
- The prevention of public nuisance.

The government's intention under the Licensing Act was to replace existing outdated legislation with one set of co-ordinated rules and the Council would be required to Licence the following as the Licensing Authority.

- Retail sale of alcohol.
- Supply of alcohol to members of a club.
- Provision of regulated entertainment.
- Provision of late night refreshments.

Each local authority was required to make a Statement of Licensing Policy and would need to review and publish such a statement every three years and hold prior consultation with police, fire, licence holders, businesses and residents.

Gravesham's Statement of Licensing Policy would indicate how the licensing authority intends to approach the various functions and state how matters may be delegated for speed, efficiency and cost effectiveness. The Licensing Committee could delegate to sub-committees or officers and, where powers were delegated, the Licensing Committee would have regular reports on decisions made by officers to enable them to maintain an overview.

The government had stated that the first appointed day would be 7 February 2005. However, the government had not announced the second appointed day but it was indicated that it would be nine months later, i.e. November 2005. The period between the first appointed day and the second appointed day would be a "transition" period when the Licensing Committee could issue licences to take effect after the second appointed day. Liquor licensing would still be retained by the Magistrates' Court during this transition period.

As previously reported to the Cabinet the council's approach had been that the Environmental and Public Health Services Department would take the lead in functions required under the Licensing Act and this had been the case with 80 per cent of local authorities at district level.

The committee was informed that there would be over 400 premises to be licensed within the borough and it was imperative that members and officers undertook detailed training on the implications of the Licensing Act and the working of the Licensing Committee. There was still further government guidance to come on outstanding issues, such as the fees to be paid and the prescribed forms to be used.

Following the presentation members asked questions to the Environmental Health Manager and the Senior Licensing Officer.

Resolved that

- (1) a further meeting of the Licensing Committee be held in September 2004 in order to consider Gravesham's Statement of Licensing Policy;
- (2) dedicated training on the Licensing Act 2003 and the role of the Licensing Committee and any licensing sub-groups be provided at the civic centre and open to all members of the Council to attend;
- (3) copies of the power point presentation on the Licensing Act 2003 be sent to all members of the Council.

Close of Meeting

The meeting ended at 8:55pm.