

LICENSING COMMITTEE



TUESDAY, 23 JULY 2019 - 11.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor M Humphrey (Chairman), Councillor R Skoulding (Vice-Chairman), Councillor A Lynn, Councillor A Maul, Councillor N Meekins, Councillor W Rackley, Councillor M Tanfield and Councillor D Topgood

APOLOGIES: Councillor Miss S Hoy and Councillor Mrs K Mayor

OBSERVING: Councillor S Clark

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Linda Albon (Member Services & Governance Officer), Michelle Bishop (Licensing Manager) and Dan Horn (Head of Housing & Neighbourhood Services)

LIC4/19 PREVIOUS MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of 25 April 2019 were agreed and signed.

LIC5/19 REVIEW OF CUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT POLICY.

Members considered the Review of Cumulative Impact Assessment Policy report presented by Michelle Bishop.

Michelle pointed out that this was previously known as the Cumulative Impact Zone (CIZ). The policy has been brought forward for consideration for consultation due to changing legislation.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Lynn said that the zone covers a small area and yet there are almost 40 places where alcohol can be purchased at any given time. Councillor Humphrey agreed but said we cannot take away what already exists. This is about consulting on whether we keep the area in place, which allows us, as a committee when we attend hearings, to challenge those premises and refuse changes if necessary. It also gives us an opportunity to look at business models and their impact on the town. We do not want to restrict good businesses. He added that this does not deal with street drinking, which is dealt with in a different way.
- Councillor Humphrey further pointed out that the police have stated that problems have reduced over the last two years, but he does not see that as a direct result of the policy. However, we do not know how many applications we would have received within that area, but suspects not many more as he believes the area has reached saturation point.
- Councillor Lynn asked if there is a reason why this zone exists in Wisbech and not throughout Fenland. Councillor Humphrey advised that there cannot be a blanket CIZ. The current area exists as a result of feedback from Wisbech residents after consultation.
- Councillor Tanfield asked who we would consult with and over how big an area. Michelle Bishop confirmed that all consultations are publicised district-wide on social media and the Council website, in the four customer service centres and local press.
- Councillor Tanfield wondered how a member of the public living outside of Wisbech could comment on what was happening there, and asked if they would have an opportunity to state if they felt such a zone was needed in their own town. Councillor Humphrey pointed out that the public are free to express such requests as part of their comments. Michelle Bishop added that

it was actually the police who applied for the current CIZ as a tool to tackle street drinking and associated anti-social behaviour that they were experiencing in that specific area.

- Councillor Meekins said that he found it difficult to believe that Wisbech is unique in terms of street drinking and anti-social behaviour. Michelle Bishop reiterated that Fenland only has the one CIZ in place as requested by the police as this had been deemed a 'hotspot' area and the evidence had been provided to show this to be necessary. Councillor Humphrey added that neither the police nor other responsible authorities have requested a CIZ be in place in any other town; however it does not mean that they do not have issues of street drinking and anti-social behaviour, which could exist anyway, but would need dealing with on a separate basis.
- Councillor Skoulding said that other areas do not have the same number of outlets as exist in Wisbech. Councillor Lynn pointed out that the outlets would not be there if they were not being used. Councillor Skoulding agreed, adding that the number of public houses in March has reduced considerably over time due to lack of demand.
- Councillor Topgood asked if the consultation would make clear that the policy review is about licensing more premises rather than enforcement on street drinking. Michelle Bishop clarified that the public will be asked their views on whether they would like to see this policy remain in its current form or be amended in terms of the area being widened, reduced, or removed altogether. Enforcement and street drinking is not an area that will be dealt with within the consultation.
- Councillor Maul affirmed Councillor Topgood's concerns that the public may get confused between licensing and enforcement. Once the consultation goes out in relation to the CIA, they would think it was about street drinking when it is actually about the issuing of licenses to sell alcohol within the area. Michelle Bishop agreed it is linked to a degree with street drinking because if street drinkers have an outlet to go to, then potentially that is where they will purchase their alcohol. She will look at the wording but there will be a questionnaire which will help, and a comments box will clarify that the consultation is on the CIA with an opportunity to add any further comments that people wish to raise.
- Councillor Maul asked how many applications for new licences have been received since 2016 when the previous policy was introduced. Michelle Bishop confirmed that in the last two years, there have only been two applications in the area. Councillor Maul stated that a 'like-for-like' on how many applications have been received prior to the CIZ being in place would give people an idea whether the policy is working and the impact it has had since being in place.
- Councillor Skoulding added that it would be useful to see how many premises have also closed down in that period. Michelle Bishop said at least two or three have surrendered their licence in the last few years. Councillor Maul felt this may have more to do with rent issues and not falling alcohol sales.
- Councillor Tanfield said the consultation should be clearly worded in order to involve as many people as possible and if they are thinking of street drinking, it will be clear by their views.
- Councillor Humphrey said that the policy will support the work that the committee undertakes at hearings, allowing the opportunity to refuse applications where necessary, but equally not being a blanket ban against good businesses that want to come forward.
- Michelle Bishop added that the consultation will run for a minimum of four weeks.

Members agreed to APPROVE that officers undertake the consultation in relation to the CIA Policy and that officers will:

- **Consult on the area as defined in Appendix B and the CIA Policy as defined in Appendix A of the report.**
- **Follow the consultation procedure as per Section 5.3 of the Licensing Act 2003.**
- **Report back to the Licensing Committee with the outcome of the consultation for a decision to be made.**
- **Ask the community whether they think maintaining the policy and area in its current form is a good idea or not.**

LIC6/19 REVIEW OF GAMBLING STATEMENT OF POLICY DOCUMENT.

Members considered the Review of Gambling Statement of Policy Document report presented by Michelle Bishop.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Tanfield commented that there was little change between this reviewed policy and the previous version.
- Councillor Humphrey asked what constituted an unlicensed family entertainment centre. Michelle Bishop explained it was the terminology used for premises that used smaller categories of machines such as the 'toy grab' machines and were places where young children could be taken.

Members agreed to APPROVE:

- **The draft policy document under the Gambling Act 2005 as detailed within the report for a consultation period of no less than four weeks.**
- **That officers report back to Licensing Committee with the outcomes of the consideration to agree a final version to be referred to full council for adoption.**

11.28 am

Chairman