

Licensing Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 4 March 2024

Present: Councillor Grimshaw (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors: Connolly, Andrews, Evans, Flanagan, Hewitson, T Judge and Ludford

Apologies: Councillor Hilal, Hughes, Reid and Riasat

LC/24/1 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2023 as a correct record.

LC/24/2 Government consultation on age verification and remote sales in connection with alcohol

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing, which presented information on the UK Government's Consultation on whether to allow digital identities and technology to play a role in age verification for alcohol sales and whether for sales of alcohol that do not take place face to face, age verification should take place at the point of delivery as well as at the point of sale. In addition, the consultation also asked for consideration on whether the Licensing Act 2003 adequately covered transactions known as remote sales.

The Principal Licensing Officer (Planning, Licensing and Building Control) introduced the report and outlined the key points for consideration. The Committee was invited to review the consultation proposals and provide officers with any views to be reflected in the Authority's formal response.

The Committee broadly welcomed the proposals and commented as follows:

- The proposals would facilitate an alignment with other remote sale providers
- Providers and Third Party Deliverers: how well-equipped are they in terms of knowledge and technology to enable them to carry out age verification checks in a safe and secure way ?
- Third Party Deliverers: what will their responsibilities be with regard to General Data Protection Regulations in view of the handling of personal information?
- Artificial Intelligence: what consideration has been given to its role in fraudulent transactions, how well is it understood and how robustly would it be policed and monitored following implementation.
- Digital Identity Providers: which organisations will be involved in the provision of acceptable digital identities and what checks and balances will be in place to enable the national standards to be safely and securely met?

The Committee agreed that the draft consultation response would be circulated to its members outside of the meeting, mindful that the final sign off of the draft sat with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

Decision

1. To note report subject to the comments outlined above.
2. To agree that the draft response shall be circulated to members of the committee outside of the meeting mindful that the final sign off would be undertaken by the Chair of the Committee.

LC/24/3 Government consultation on proposed amendments to the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill: standard tier

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing, which presented information about the Government's consultation on requirements proposed in relation to standard duty premises, referred to as the "standard tier", under the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill.

In summary the proposal specific to standard tier premises was for there to be no requirement to complete a specified form (the 'Standard Terrorism Evaluation') for standard tier premises or ensure that people working at the premises were given any bespoke training on terrorism protection as outlined in the report. Instead it was proposed that as part of implementing the procedural measures, venue staff would need to be sufficiently instructed or trained in an alignment with company procedures concerning evacuation, invacuation, lockdown and communications procedures in order to carry them out effectively through their own in-house training products.

The Principal Licensing Officer (Planning, Licensing and Building Control) introduced the report and out lined the key points for consideration. Emphasis was given to a lack of sufficient detail on the precise nature of training or on any requirements that would be necessary to put the proposed procedures in place. A risk was therefore highlighted with regard to undermining the efforts the Authority had made in respect of the training that had already been provided to licensed premises in the city. A further risk was highlighted in relation to a focus purely on response procedures in contrast to the current training offer which went far beyond what was being proposed in terms of protection and security. He referred to recent feedback on a trial workshop to work through the original proposals where it emerged that concerns over cost and burden had been overwhelmingly dispelled once the practicalities had been tested leading to a conclusion that the original proposals were not felt to be burdensome.

The Committee was invited to consider the consultation proposals and provide officers with any views to be reflected in the Authority's formal response.

The Committees comments were as follows:

- Members were disheartened and expressed concern that the proposals were effectively a dilution of what were felt to be minimum requirements. It was felt that proposals significantly undermined what the city was striving to achieve in terms of safety for venue staff and users.
- Members felt that insufficient consideration had been given to known human behaviours in life-threatening circumstances and that the role of 'shock' had not been carefully considered. Members felt that it was manifestly unreasonable to expect venues and members of staff to deliver an effective and meaningful response to an attack without an appropriate level of preparation.
- The Action Counter Terrorism (ACT) training which had been delivered to thousands of the premises in the city placed no financial impediment on businesses and only required venue staff to undertake a small number of hours training to seek to ensure the safety of venue users.
- The Committee did not accept that the Home Affairs Select Committee's conclusion that this placed an unnecessary burden on venues was factually correct given the overwhelmingly positive feedback from venues in the city that had already undertaken ACT training.
- The focus of Section 182 guidance was to promote protection and prevention and the proposal to remove bespoke counter terrorism training for standard tier venues was counter-intuitive in view of the clear message from venues in this city that the original measures had benefited businesses and was neither burdensome nor a hindrance.

The Committee agreed that the draft consultation response would be circulated to its members outside of the meeting, mindful that the final sign off of the draft sat with the Chair and Deputy Chair. The Principal Licensing Officer highlighted that the Authority would be submitting a corporate response to the consultation, meaning that comments from other areas of the Council would be included.

Decision

1. To note report subject to the comments outlined above.
2. To agree that the draft response shall be circulated to members of the committee outside of the meeting mindful that the final sign off would be undertaken by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee.

LC/24/4 Matthew Callaghan

The Principal Licensing Officer (Planning, Licensing and Building Control) informed the Committee that Matthew Callaghan (Principal Licensing Officer) would be retiring from his position at the end of the month. Matthew had been a longstanding member of the Licensing Unit, whose years of service predated the introduction of the Licensing Act (2003).

The Committee agreed to place on record its sincere thanks for Matthew's hard work, knowledge, experience and long service over the years and wished him all the best in his retirement.