

Licensing Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 13 November 2023

Present: Councillor Grimshaw – in the Chair

Councillors: Connolly, Andrews, Evans, Flanagan, Hewitson, Hughes, Judge, Riasat and Reid

Apologies: Councillors Ludford and Hilal

LC/23/04 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2023 as a correct record.

LC/23/05 Statement of Licensing Policy 2023-2028

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing, which presented proposed revisions of the Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003. This followed consideration of the matter at the previous Licensing Committee on 23 October 2023 and at Licensing Policy Committee on 31 October 2023.

On 10 March 2023, the Licensing Policy Committee received a report presenting the draft revised Statement of Licensing Policy and requested officers to consult upon it. Officers consulted with statutory consultees and arranged for an 8-week public consultation which took place from 31 May to 26 July.

On 23 October 2023, the Licensing Committee received a report presenting the findings of the public consultation and the changes proposed as a result. On 31 October 2023, the Licensing Policy Committee considered the recommendation of the Licensing Committee and referred the matter back to this Committee.

The draft policy is updated to include the proposed area plans and copies of these are provided at Appendix 1. Subject to any further required amendments and subsequent approval of the Licensing Policy Committee at the scheduled meeting on 20 November 2023, it was intended to present the policy to the Council on 29 November 2023 to approve the publication of this policy.

It was noted that all areas could be kept under review and this policy would not rule out special policies for areas that do not currently have one.

The Committee were provided with two options; Option 1 was to retain Section 6 with the addition of the area boundary maps for Fallowfield and Withington Special Policies, and Option 2 revised Section 6 to remove any 'Special Policy' and to put the revised policy back out to public consultation.

The Chair invited the Committee to comment on the proposed Licensing Policy.

A member queried how many responses had been received to the public consultation from Fallowfield and Withington. 41 responses were received in total, but the Principal Licensing Officer was unsure how many were received from each area. They believed that over 80% were from Fallowfield and Withington, with the rest from City Centre residents.

A member queried why any area should have a special policy when others do not, noting their belief that all areas experience problems. It was stated that area profiles were based on clusters of Licensed Premises. It was recognised that all areas do have challenges but that some are more significant than others. A continued analysis of data would allow the Licensing Unit to continuously review the policy.

A member asked how an area that had not yet been developed had a special policy and if the names of special policies could be more specific to the area they are for. It was noted that this was due to experience of similar areas and members can raise issues for other areas. The policy could be reviewed at any point if appropriate to do so. The Principal Licensing Officer was supportive of more specific titles for special policy areas.

A member wondered how many Licensed Premises an area would require for a special policy to be implemented, whilst concerns were also raised regarding the 'patchwork' nature of special policies across the City. It was noted that placing a special policy in an area was not an exact science and that various things went into it, including the number of alcohol related issues, not just the number of Licensed Premises. It was accepted that the 'patchwork' nature could become a limitation if the number of special policy areas becomes too many.

The Licensing Unit manager noted that it was a challenge to keep up with the development of the City and that the policy had been worked on for a long time. They accepted that other areas had their own issues, but the evidence gathered from various teams across the Council, GMP and others had informed the need for special policy areas. The Licensing Unit manager did believe that the issues experienced in Fallowfield and Withington were different to those in other areas. They noted additional guidance could be provided for other areas.

A member queried the process for an area becoming a special policy area. The Committee's legal adviser stated that the policy would continually be under review and could be amended at any time. Any substantial change to the policy, such as creating a new special policy area, would require public consultation but the rest of the policy would remain live during that time.

Decision

To recommend to the Licensing Policy Committee the following:

1. To retain Section 6 with the addition of the area boundary maps for Fallowfield and Withington Special Policies.
2. To amend the names of the special policy areas to be more specific to the area rather than the ward.

3. Delegating to the Chair and Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing to look into the possibility of annual reviews with ward members and officers to see if there is a need to add or remove any special policy areas.