

## Reopening of the Hospitality sector

### 1 Background

The government announced on 23 June that many parts of the hospitality sector would be allowed to reopen in a COVID 19 secure way including pubs, bars restaurants and cafes from 4 July 2020. Guidance for these sectors was published on 24 June 2020 and the regulations were published on 3 July 2020. On 25 June 2020 a draft Business and Planning Bill was published. This is being fast tracked through Parliament. It received its Second reading in the House of Lords on 6 July where the general debate on all aspects of the Bill - took place and will move to the Committee stage where a line by line examination of the Bill will take place which is scheduled for 13 July. Key elements of this bill relevant to the reopening of the hospitality sector are a fast track application process in respect of pavement licences to allow external furniture to be placed outside premises for sale of food and drink for consumption on or off the premises plus a temporary relaxation of licensing laws to September 2021 to allow premises to provide off as well as on sales including in open containers.

### 2 Planning and preparation for relaxation of lockdown:

Prior to any published advice or planning assumptions having been issued by government, the council and our partners had been putting in place operational plans to enable the city's hospitality sector to reopen in a safe and sustainable way. That put us in a good place to firm up our plans when the guidance was published.

Extensive planning and preparation has been required by the council and our partners which has included :

- **Providing guidance for and expectations of licensed premises -**

all premises are required to follow government guidance and we have clearly set out our expectations of how this will be applied in Manchester including completion of a risk assessment to ensure the premises is covid 19 secure, measures to comply with social distancing, ensuring all staff are briefed on and understand their covid 19 policies and procedures including how to recognise and respond swiftly to suspected cases of covid 19, ensuring they have good processes in place for managing entry and dispersal, queuing and capacity with pre booking recommended.

Premises are also required to have clear and prominent signage so that customers are equally aware of what is required of them and hand sanitisation facilities at entrances and high-contact areas such as reception and toilet areas.

To assist in contact tracing, which is a key element of controlling the spread of the virus, all premises are also collecting visitor information including name and contact details of customers which they are asked to verify before entry is permitted

- **Provision of outside seating for licensed premises**

The emergency legislation to facilitate temporary outside seating (pavement licences) will enable local authorities to grant shorter term licences up until September 2021, They will require only a 7 day public consultation (as opposed to 28 days) and will not require applicants to seek planning permission prior to submitting their application. As noted above this is currently progressing through the various Parliamentary stages

We have prepared for this by streamlining our own process, and a new application form for the temporary licences went live on our website on 26 June 2020. Premises are being informed and advised to submit an application by officers who are visiting premises across the city and that they will be considered in due course.

In the meantime we have engaged with operators to support them in maintaining social distancing requirements through the provision of enhanced external space where possible. Emergency highways measures were put in place in the city for 4 July to ensure public safety where there are narrower streets and clusters of licensed venues.

- **Compliance and Enforcement**

The compliance and enforcement element of the plans to reopen the hospitality sector have been key to ensure the welfare of our residents, workers and visitors is protected. Council staff have worked closely with GMP who had a comprehensive policing plan in place for the city

The Licensing and Out of Hours Compliance Team resumed the night shift service, working alongside GMP colleagues, in line with the reopening of the sector on the 4th July. The team covered throughout the day and up until 04:30 on Saturday night/Sunday morning and until 01:00 on Sunday 5th/Monday 6th. They will continue to work until 04:30 on Friday and Saturday nights and until 01:00 on other night shifts but these hours will be reviewed regularly in line with how the sector recovers and operates.

As was the case pre lockdown and during lockdown, it is the responsibility of premises owners to ensure that they are compliant with the new guidelines. The approach to compliance is to engage, educate and encourage premises to comply with enforcement as a last resort. We expect licensed premises to follow the steps set out in the guidance and work constructively with them to help them interpret guidance to maximise the safety of their staff and customers. Businesses, in general, want to provide a safe and enjoyable experience for their customers and we are confident that the majority will work hard to make sure they do. We recognise the size and significance of the hospitality industry in Manchester and want to do as much as we can to help businesses get back on their feet.

However, where premises are not providing a safe and covid secure environment or are not managing their space well - both indoors and outdoors and are not willing to follow advice and guidance given then we will take appropriate enforcement action.

- **Welfare Plans**

We worked closely with NWS who had a comprehensive plan in place to respond to any medical issues/accidents arising in the city and the St John Ambulance Alcohol Reception Unit (ARC) was in operation in the city centre on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th for the first weekend but will revert to Friday and Saturday nights. Hours of operation will be kept under review and adjusted in line with the operation of the NTE

- **Transport**

We worked closely with TfGM on offering safe travel advice, including information on taxis and private hire. Customers were provided with details on quietest and busiest times on the transport network.

- **Taxis**

Communication was sent to the taxi and private hire trades about their role in ensuring people are able to leave the city safely due to the reduced capacity in other forms of public transport.

- **Taxi Compliance**

The Taxi and Private Hire Compliance Team resumed normal shift hours from 3 July, working until 03:00hrs, as did the contracted marshalls for the designated ranks. Compliance staff check drivers and vehicles are legitimately licensed for public safety, check compliance with licence conditions and assist the marshalls and other colleagues to manage traffic safely where congestion arises and deter private hire vehicle plotting in high footfall areas. They also assist the taxi trade to rank safely and familiarise themselves with new road closures and traffic systems. Out of town vehicles remain a challenge for us, and we will continue to deter illegal activity with our joint illegal ply operations with GMP. GM authorities have also been asked to circulate a message to their Private Hire Operators not to send their vehicles into Manchester unless they are dropping off or have a pre-booking, and to assist more in challenging and deterring their attendance in Manchester without a booking.

- **Traffic Management**

We planned for significant pedestrian demand in areas of the city where people would be accessing hospitality venues. In light of the need to maintain social distancing and concerns around pedestrians having to use road space in order to navigate around high pedestrian volumes on pavements, various road closures and other traffic management measures were used to maintain pedestrian safety. These will be kept under review and should amendments or more robust measures be needed, these will be considered on an ongoing basis in conjunction with colleagues from GMP and TfGM. There was an excellent communication and engagement plan to advise the visiting public and local businesses and residents around where these measures are and the need to plan journeys and access.

- **Parking Enforcement**

Parking enforcement will operate as normal in NTE and will be kept under review to meet the needs based on the level of activity in the city

- **Street Cleansing and Litter Bins**

Premises with extended provision on the highway are required to keep these areas clean during the hours of operation 11am - midnight . Biffa will provide normal cleansing services outside of these hours.

- **Communication**

Since 15 June an overarching 'Welcome Back' campaign has been running to provide a reassuring voice as more people return to the city centre and to share public health guidance. A multi channel approach has been used, based around the web portal <https://welcomebackmanchester.com>. The portal includes links to partners including TfGM, Health and Government. The portal also provides downloadable assets for businesses and organisations to use, including digital artwork, posters and social media content.

Alongside the Welcome Back campaign there were specific communications messages to highlight changes or adaptations that have been made to make the city centre safer, aligned with the road closures and the need to navigate differently around the city centre, providing the most up to date public health messages and supporting compliance and enforcement.

### **3 Feedback from reopening**

#### **Weekend 1 - 4th and 5th July**

As noted above there was extensive planning put in place to ensure a safe and successful reopening of the hospitality sector and this really paid off.

A significant number of venues successfully reopened across both the city centre and across our neighbourhoods and there was a good level of business throughout the day.

There was a significant police and compliance presence across the city with proactive visits done to premises throughout the day and night on both Saturday and Sunday.

Visits in general found that there were high levels of compliance across the city and where issues were identified the premises were in general quick to rectify them.

The external areas that had been put in place to facilitate social distancing were generally well managed. There were some issues with managing the combination of queuing, smoking and seating in some areas with particularly high footfall but only 2 premises in the city were asked to close as a result of not adequately managing external space

Partners reported a similar picture with no major issues from a policing perspective. NWAS and St John Ambulance Welfare unit reported a quiet weekend and there were very few alcohol related admissions at A&E.

### **Weekend 2 10th-12th July**

A very similar picture across the second weekend of reopening. It was busier during the day and into the evening with a greater number of premises having reopened and the weather was much better than the previous weekend.

There was a significant police and compliance presence across the city with proactive visits done to premises throughout the day and night on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Premises were in general well managed and in most premises where advice was given, to improve their operating practices they were quick to comply. The premises that had voluntarily closed the previous weekend had put measures in place to avoid any repeats of the problems they had experienced and these worked well. Although the weather was much better we did not see any significant increases in people drinking in open spaces or any associated ASB.

Partners reported a similar picture with no major issues from a policing perspective. NWAS and St John Ambulance Welfare unit also reported another quiet weekend.

## **4 Next Steps**

The council, GMP and other partners will continue to take a proactive approach to visiting and monitoring premises in the hospitality sector and working with them to help them deliver a safe and enjoyable experience.

Premises that were given advice in the first two weekends due to issues with non compliance have been visited to ensure that they have adequate measures in place, such as only accepting pre booking at busy periods, so that there are no repeats of non compliance.

Where repeated non compliance is found enforcement action will be taken.