

LICENSING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MINUTES - 23 MARCH 2010

Present: Councillor Skeats (Chair);
Councillors Beard, Chowdhary, Edwards, Goodall and P Jones.

Apologies: Councillors Byrne and Tickner.

RESOLVED ITEMS

5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. EVENING ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ADOPTION OF A CUMULATIVE IMPACT POLICY

Further to Minute 3 of the meeting held on 29 September 2009, the Director of Environment, Culture and Sport submitted a report to set out the outcome of a consultation exercise on the possible adoption of a Cumulative Impact Policy (CIP) in Reading town centre, to propose formal wording for a town centre CIP and a revised CIP boundary, to report further updated and detailed evidence to support the revised CIP proposals, and to propose a further consultation period to allow residents, businesses and other interested parties opportunity to comment on the specific policy wording and revised proposals.

The following appendices had been attached to the report:

Appendix I	Consultation letter dated 23 October 2009;
Appendices II to VIII	Consultation responses;
Appendix IX	Proposed CIP wording and associated plans and evidence.

The report explained that Cumulative Impact was the potential of a significant number of licensed premises concentrated in one area to impact on the promotion of the licensing objectives, which were the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and protection of children from harm. A CIP was considered appropriate in areas where the number, type and density of premises selling alcohol for consumption on the premises was unusual, and serious problems of nuisance and disorder might arise outside or some distance from licensed premises. For example, a concentration of young drinkers could result in queues at fast food outlets and for public transport, possibly leading to conflict, disorder and anti-social behaviour. A CIP would create a rebuttal presumption that applications for new premises licences or club premises certificates or material variations, which were likely to add to the existing cumulative impact, would normally be refused, where relevant representations had been received.

The report noted that on 29 September 2009 the Committee had resolved to instruct officers to undertake a consultation exercise regarding the possible adoption of a CIP for the town centre, and report back the outcome (Minute 3 refers). In October 2009 a letter, attached to the report at Appendix I, had been sent to over 200 individuals and businesses, and the consultation had been published on the Council's

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website. Officers had attended meetings of the Town Centre Neighbourhood Action Group, Pubwatch and the Business Improvement District Committee to discuss the proposals. Seven written responses to the consultation had been received, and were attached to the report at Appendices II to VIII. This preliminary consultation had demonstrated support from businesses, residents and statutory authorities for a town centre CIP, with relatively little opposition.

Attached to the report at Appendix IX was a proposed wording for the town centre CIP, with appendices showing the proposed boundary of the CIP and crime and disorder statistics for the whole Borough and the proposed CIP area. It was proposed to carry out a further consultation on the wording and boundary, to seek the views of interested parties listed in Section 5(3) of the Licensing Act 2003: the chief officer of police for the area, the Fire and Rescue Authority for the area, persons/bodies representative of local holders of premises licences, persons/bodies representative of local holders of club premises certificates, persons/bodies representative of local holders of personal licences and persons/bodies representative of businesses and residents in the area.

William Donne, Silver Fox Licensing Consultants, was present at the meeting and addressed the Committee regarding his concerns about the adoption of a CIP, including the possible effect on inward investment from smaller operators and the ability of the licensing authority to defend the refusal of applications under the policy against legal action from large organisations. He also noted the large size of the proposed boundary, and the possible displacement effect on areas outside it such as Oxford Road and Wokingham Road.

Sergeant Wheeler, Thames Valley Police, attended the meeting and addressed the Committee on the difficulties that the volume of late night drinking venues in the town centre presented for policing.

The Committee discussed the report and a number of points were raised including the following:

- A long-term benefit of the policy could be to broaden the range of licensed premises available in the town centre, and encourage more people of different ages to visit the town centre in the evening;
- The draft wording of the CIP set out a different approach for different types of venue, and specified the types of establishment that would be covered by the policy;
- Any issues with displacement of crime to areas outside the proposed CIP could be addressed as and when they occurred;
- Government guidance was for a CIP to be reviewed regularly to see whether it was still required, and if so whether it needed to be expanded. As part of the Council's Licensing Policy Statement the CIP would also be formally reviewed every three years.

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Resolved -

- (1) That the results of the consultation on a town centre Cumulative Impact Policy (CIP) be noted;
- (2) That available evidence detailing crime and disorder in the town centre, associated with late night alcohol consumption showing that, although falling, crime and disorder remained at unacceptably high levels, be noted;
- (3) That the proposed wording and boundary of a town centre CIP, as set out in Appendix IX to the report, be noted;
- (4) That licensing officers consult with the people/bodies specified in section 5(3) of the Licensing Act 2003 on the proposed wording and boundary of the CIP, and a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

(The meeting started at 1.04pm and closed at 1.43pm.)