

LICENSING ACT 2003 HEARING ON THURSDAY 27 JUNE 2019 @ 9.30 HOURS

APPLICATION FOR THE REVIEW OF A PREMISES LICENCE

1. Premises:

Mr Tajender Singh Parmar
Best One
1a Nire Road,
Caversham
Reading
RG1 5LT

2. Applicants Requesting Review:

Ian Savill on behalf of the Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures

3. Grounds for Review

The Trading Standards team as a responsible authority under the Licensing Act 2003 and under the licensing objectives of prevention of crime and disorder, the prevention of public nuisance, the protection of children from harm and public safety make application for the review of the premises licence for Best One, 1a Nire Road, Caversham, Reading.

A combination of underage alcohol sales and a host of licence condition breaches unearthed during inspections outlined below have led Reading Borough Council's Trading Standards to taking this final serious step in reviewing the premises licence.

25.10.2018 - The shop was visited during a Thames Valley Police under 18 test purchase exercise, where a 17 year old was able to purchase alcohol from Mr Parmar, the premises licence holder and designated premises supervisor without being asked for proof of age. Less than four months later, the shop was visited again during a second under 18 test purchase, conducted by Reading Borough Council, where a 15 year old was able to purchase alcohol without being asked for proof of age.

20.03.2019 - The shop was then visited during a joint inspection by a Licensing Enforcement Officer and the Community Alcohol Partnership Officer. During this inspection a number of items required attention. Therefore, the premises is failing in its duty to promote the licensing objectives of the prevention of crime and disorder and protecting children from harm.

The owner Mr Parmar, who has been the premises licence holder and designated premises supervisor since September 2017. The issues contributing to this review application began on the 25th October 2018 when Mr Parmar failed a Thames Valley Police under age test purchase, when he sold alcohol to a 17 year old test purchaser without asking for proof of age.

Following an initial failed test purchase failure by Mr Parmar, it was expected that he take immediate steps to improve diligence by retraining, particularly around challenging for proof of age in practice, recording refusals and ensuring suitable signage is on display advising customers of the age verification policy. However, on the 18 February 2019, the shop failed a second test purchase, this time selling alcohol without asking for proof of age from a 15 year old test purchaser.

The time between the two failures was just under four months, and while this is outside the offence of persistently selling alcohol to a person under the age of 18 (two failures in three months) under s147A of the Licensing Act 2003, it was not by far. Guidance on s147A of the Licensing Act 2003 and s182 Guidance states:

s147A Guidance

68. Amendments to the statutory guidance issued under section 182 of the 2003 Act (following revisions through the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011) recommend that where the offence of persistently selling alcohol to children has been committed at a premises that licensing authorities should review the premises licence with a view to considering revocation of the licence unless such a course is plainly not appropriate. To help this process, the police and trading standards should ensure that they notify licensing authorities about underage sales. This might be done through regular meetings with the licensing authority or through forums on which the police, trading standards and licensing authorities sit.

11.29 The Government recognises that the majority of licensed premises operate responsibly and undertake due diligence checks on those who appear to be under the age of 18 at the point of sale (or 21 and 25 where they operate a Challenge 21 or 25 scheme). Where these systems are in place, licensing authorities may wish to take a proportionate approach in cases where there have been two sales of alcohol within very quick succession of one another (e.g., where a new cashier has not followed policy and conformed with a store's age verification procedures). However, where persistent sales of alcohol to children have occurred at premises, and it is apparent that those managing the premises do not operate a responsible policy or have not exercised appropriate due diligence, responsible authorities should consider taking steps to ensure that a review of the licence is the norm in these circumstances. This is particularly the case where there has been a prosecution for the offence under section 147A or a closure notice has been given under section 169A of the 2003 Act. In determining the review, the licensing authority should consider revoking the licence if it considers this appropriate.

To assist in determining general compliance with the Licensing Act 2003 objectives, and to see if the business had been taking steps to make improvements following the test purchase failures, an inspection of the premises took place on the 20th March 2019 by a Licensing Officer of Reading Borough Council and the Community Alcohol Partnership Officer. Several matters were noted including a lack of authorisations to sell alcohol, no training records produced and no refusals log. These are practical issues and beyond some of the more administrative defects often found in licensed premises.

The impact of the two failed test purchases does not appear to have landed with Mr Parmar, the premises licence Holder and demonstrates that either there is wilful neglect of his responsibilities under the Licensing Act 2003 or he is simply ignorant of those obligations.

The lack of response from Mr Parmar to the two failures, demonstrated by the failings found on the inspection on the 20th March 2019, suggest that Mr Parmar does not have the prerequisites required for responsible retailing of alcohol and as such, **the Trading Standards Service recommends the revocation of the premises licence.**

Licensing team/TVP/CAP inspections and interactions with the premises.

The Licensing Authority fully support the application for the review of the premises licence for Best One, 1a Nire Road, Caversham, Reading.

On 25.10. 2018 Thames Valley Police completed a test purchase process at Best One during which Mr Parmar, the premises licence holder and designated premises supervisor sold a bottle of Bulmers Cider abv 4.0% to an underage female. Mr Parmar was issued with a fixed penalty notice for £90.00 for the offence committed which is understood to have been paid.

On the 20.02.2019 a Licensing officer visited with the Council's Community Alcohol Partnership (CAB) Officer and found the following issues:

- 1) Part B of the premises licence was seen on display however it was an out of date copy with the name of the former licence holder on which is a criminal offence.
- 2) Part A of the premises licence could not be produced. Two pages of Part A were found on the wall but the other pages were missing which is a criminal offence.
- 3) A Section 57 notice was not displayed at the premises which is a criminal offence.
- 4) No staff could demonstrate that they had been authorised to sell alcohol.

Advisories

- 5) No training records could be produced for any member of staff.
- 6) No refusal book was in use at the premises.
- 7) No incident book was in use at the premises to record any incident that undermines the promotion of the four licensing objectives.
- 8) Issues with operation of CCTV which assist in promoting the licensing objective of preventing crime and disorder.
- 9) Staff did not know what the four licensing objectives were.

Legislation, Case Law and Licensing Act 2003 Guidance

It should be noted that paragraph 51 of the Licensing Act 2003 states that a review is of the premises licence and not the premises licence holder. Therefore the activities that have been carried on in accordance, or not in accordance, with a licence are what should be considered when determining a review application.

It should also be noted that in the High Court case (case stated) of East Lindsey DC v Abu Hanif it states:

That the licensing objectives require a prospective consideration of what is warranted in the public interest having regard to the twin considerations of prevention and deterrence.

Role of the designated premises licence holder(DPS)

The Licensing Act states the DPS is the person in day-to-day control of the licensed premises. The DPS must be a personal licence holder. They are the person nominated for the role by the premises licence holder and should be the person in day-to-day control of the premises. The DPS is required where the sale of alcohol by retail takes place and is the main point of accountability within premises where alcohol is sold. They should be easily identifiable by the police or other authorities as the person in charge of the premises. The role carries with it a great deal of responsibility. The DPS plays a key role in actively promoting the licensing objectives and in implementing the

measures stated in the operating schedule and must ensure that the premises operate legally at all times.

The 2003 Act does not require a designated premises supervisor or any other personal licence holder to be present on the premises at all times when alcohol is sold. However, the designated premises supervisor and the premises licence holder remain responsible for the premises at all times including compliance with the terms of the 2003 Act and conditions attached to the premises licence to promote the licensing objectives.

Mandatory Conditions (noted on premises licence)

Age Verification Policy (commencement 01/10/2014)

1. The premises licence holder or club premises certificate holder must ensure that an age verification policy is adopted in respect of the premises in relation to the sale or supply of alcohol.
2. The designated premises supervisor in relation to the premises licence must ensure that the supply of alcohol at the premises is carried on in accordance with the age verification policy.
3. The policy must require individuals who appear to the responsible person to be under 18 years of age (or such older age as may be specified in the policy) to produce on request, before being served alcohol, identification bearing their photograph, date of birth and either—
 - (a) a holographic mark, or
 - (b) an ultraviolet feature.

4. Date of receipt of application: 09.05.2019

A copy of the review application received is shown at Appendix PN-1

5. Date of closure of period for representations: 04.06.2019

6. Representations received:

During the 28 day consultation period, representations were received in regard to this review application from;

Thames Valley Police which is shown at Appendix PN-2

The Licensing Team is shown at Appendix PN-3

Information provided by premises licence holder is shown at Appendix PN-4

Local residents (letters of support) are shown at Appendix PN-5

7. Background

The premises is located within a residential area, off the main Amersham Road, Caversham, Reading.

The premises licence holder and the designated premises supervisor is stated as: Mr Tajender Singh Parmar and has held both these positions since 2017. (if the premises is operated and managed on a day-to-day basis by the premises licence holder, then they may appoint themselves as the DPS).

The premises currently has the benefit of a premises licence for the activities and hours detailed below: A copy of the current licence LP2002114 is shown at **Appendix PN-6**

A plan showing the premises and surrounding area is shown at **Appendix PN-7**

Licensable Activities authorised by the Licence

Hours for the Sale by Retail of Alcohol - Off the Premises

Monday from 0800hrs until 2300hrs
Tuesday from 0800hrs until 2300hrs
Wednesday from 0800hrs until 2300hrs
Thursday from 0800hrs until 2300hrs
Friday from 0800hrs until 2300hrs
Saturday from 0800hrs until 2300hrs
Sunday from 1000hrs until 2230hrs
Good Friday from 0800hrs until 2230hrs Christmas Day from 1200hrs until 1500hrs and 1900hrs until 2230hrs

8. Licensing Objectives and Reading Borough Council's Licensing Policy Statement

In determining this application the Licensing Authority has a duty to carry out its functions with a view to promoting the four licensing objectives, which are as follows:-

- the prevention of crime and disorder;
- public safety
- the prevention of public nuisance
- the protection of children from harm

In determining this application the Licensing Authority must also have regard to the representations received, the Licensing Authority's statement of licensing policy and any relevant section of the statutory guidance to licensing authorities.

9. Power of Licensing Authority on the determination of a Review

In determining the application the sub-committee can take such of the steps as it considers appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives, which are:

1. take no further action
2. to issue formal warnings to the premises supervisor and/or premises licence holder
3. modify the conditions of the licence (including, but not limited to hours of operation of licensable activities)
4. exclude a licensable activity from the scope of the licence
5. remove the designated premises licence supervisor
6. suspend the licence for a period not exceeding three months
7. revoke the licence

Where the sub-committee takes a step mentioned in 3 or 4 above it may provide that the modification or exclusion is to have effect for a period not exceeding three months or

permanently.

Amended Guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 April 2018

Licensing objectives and aims

1.2 The legislation provides a clear focus on the promotion of four statutory objectives which must be addressed when licensing functions are undertaken.

1.3 The licensing objectives are:

- The prevention of crime and disorder;
- Public safety;
- The prevention of public nuisance; and
- The protection of children from harm.

1.4 Each objective is of equal importance. There are no other statutory licensing objectives, so that the promotion of the four objectives is a paramount consideration at all times.

Licensing Objectives and Aims:

1.5 However, the legislation also supports a number of other key aims and purposes. These are vitally important and should be principal aims for everyone involved in licensing work.

They include:

protecting the public and local residents from crime, anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance caused by irresponsible licensed premises;

Purpose

1.7 This Guidance is provided to licensing authorities in relation to the carrying out of their functions under the 2003 Act. It also provides information to magistrates' courts hearing appeals against licensing decisions and has been made widely available for the benefit of those who run licensed premises, their legal advisers and the general public. It is a key medium for promoting best practice, ensuring consistent application of licensing powers across England and Wales and for promoting fairness, equal treatment and proportionality.

1.8 The police remain key enforcers of licensing law. This Guidance does not bind police officers who, within the parameters of their force orders and the law, remain operationally independent. However, this Guidance is provided to support and assist police officers in interpreting and implementing the 2003 Act in the promotion of the four licensing objectives.

Legal status

1.9 Section 4 of the 2003 Act provides that, in carrying out its functions, a licensing authority must 'have regard to' guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 182. This Guidance is therefore binding on all licensing authorities to that extent. However, this Guidance cannot anticipate every possible scenario or set of circumstances that may arise and, as long as licensing authorities have properly understood this Guidance, they may depart from it if they have good reason to do so and can provide full reasons. Departure from this Guidance could give rise to an appeal or judicial review, and the reasons given will then be a key consideration for the

courts when considering the lawfulness and merits of any decision taken.

1.10 Nothing in this Guidance should be taken as indicating that any requirement of licensing law or any other law may be overridden (including the obligations placed on any public authorities under human rights legislation). This Guidance does not in any way replace the statutory provisions of the 2003 Act or add to its scope and licensing authorities should note that interpretation of the 2003 Act is a matter for the courts. Licensing authorities and others using this Guidance must take their own professional and legal advice about its implementation.

Licensing policies

1.11 Section 5 of the 2003 Act requires a licensing authority to determine and publish a statement of its licensing policy at least once every five years. The policy must be published before it carries out any licensing functions under the 2003 Act.

1.12 However, determining and publishing a statement of its policy is a licensing function and as such the authority must have regard to this Guidance when taking this step. A licensing authority may depart from its own policy if the individual circumstances of any case merit such a decision in the interests of the promotion of the licensing objectives. But once again, it is important that it should be able to give full reasons for departing from its published statement of licensing policy. Where revisions to this Guidance are issued by the Secretary of State, there may be a period of time when the licensing policy statement is inconsistent with the Guidance (for example, during any consultation by the licensing authority). In these circumstances, the licensing authority should have regard, and give appropriate weight, to this Guidance and its own existing licensing policy statement.

5.3 Section 191 provides the meaning of “alcohol” for the purposes of the 2003 Act. It should be noted that a wide variety of foodstuffs contain alcohol but generally in a highly diluted form when measured against the volume of the product. For the purposes of the 2003 Act, the sale or supply of alcohol which is of a strength not exceeding 0.5 per cent ABV (alcohol by volume) at the time of the sale or supply in question is not a licensable activity. However, where the foodstuff contains alcohol at greater strengths, for example, as with some alcoholic jellies, the sale would be a licensable activity.

5.4 The definition of alcohol was amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017 to include alcohol “in any state”. This is to make it clear that products such as powdered and vapourised alcohol fall within the definition provided by the 2003 Act.

The role of responsible authorities

9.11 Responsible authorities under the 2003 Act are automatically notified of all new applications. While all responsible authorities may make representations regarding applications for licences and club premises certificates and full variation applications, it is the responsibility of each responsible authority to determine when they have appropriate grounds to do so.

The role of responsible authorities (eg Police)

9.12 Each responsible authority will be an expert in their respective field, and in some cases it is likely that a particular responsible authority will be the licensing authority’s main source of advice in relation to a particular licensing objective. For example, the police have a key role in managing the night-time economy and should have good working relationships with those operating in their local area⁵. The police should usually therefore be the licensing authority’s main source of advice on matters relating to the promotion of the crime and disorder licensing objective. However, any

responsible authority under the 2003 Act may make representations with regard to any of the licensing objectives if they have evidence to support such representations. Licensing authorities must therefore consider all relevant representations from responsible authorities carefully, even where the reason for a particular responsible authority's interest or expertise in the promotion of a particular objective may not be immediately apparent. However, it remains incumbent on all responsible authorities to ensure that their representations can withstand the scrutiny to which they would be subject at a hearing.

Licensing authorities acting as responsible authorities

9.13 Licensing authorities are included in the list of responsible authorities. A similar framework exists in the Gambling Act 2005. The 2003 Act does not require responsible authorities to make representations about applications for the grant of premises licences or to take any other steps in respect of different licensing processes. It is, therefore, for the licensing authority to determine when it considers it appropriate to act in its capacity as a responsible authority; the licensing authority should make this decision in accordance with its duties under section 4 of the 2003 Act.

Hearings

9.31 Regulations governing hearings may be found on the www.legislation.gov.uk website. If the licensing authority decides that representations are relevant, it must hold a hearing to consider them. The need for a hearing can only be avoided with the agreement of the licensing authority, the applicant and all of the persons who made relevant representations. In cases where only 'positive' representations are received, without qualifications, the licensing authority should consider whether a hearing is required. To this end, it may wish to notify the persons who made representations and give them the opportunity to withdraw those representations. This would need to be done in sufficient time before the hearing to ensure that parties were not put to unnecessary inconvenience.

9.38 In determining the application with a view to promoting the licensing objectives in the overall interests of the local community, the licensing authority must give appropriate weight to:

- the steps that are appropriate to promote the licensing objectives;
- the representations (including supporting information) presented by all the parties;
- this Guidance;
- its own statement of licensing policy.

Determining actions that are appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives

9.42 Licensing authorities are best placed to determine what actions are appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives in their areas. All licensing determinations should be considered on a case-by-case basis. They should take into account any representations or objections that have been received from responsible authorities or other persons, and representations made by the applicant or premises user as the case may be.

9.43 The authority's determination should be evidence-based, justified as being appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives and proportionate to what it is intended to achieve.

Designated premises supervisor

10.26 The 2003 Act provides that, where a premises licence authorises the supply of alcohol, it must include a condition that no supply of alcohol may be made at a time

when no designated premises supervisor has been specified in the licence or at a time when the designated premises supervisor does not hold a personal licence or the personal licence has been suspended.

10.27 The main purpose of the ‘designated premises supervisor’ as defined in the 2003 Act is to ensure that there is always one specified individual among these personal licence holders who can be readily identified for the premises where a premises licence is in force. That person will normally have been given day to day responsibility for running the premises by the premises licence holder. The requirements set out in relation to the designated premises supervisor and authorisation of alcohol sales by a personal licence holder do not apply to community premises in respect of which a successful application has been made to disapply the usual mandatory conditions in sections 19(2) and 19(3) of the 2003 Act (see Chapter 4 of this Guidance).

10.28 The 2003 Act does not require a designated premises supervisor or any other personal licence holder to be present on the premises at all times when alcohol is sold. However, the designated premises supervisor and the premises licence holder remain responsible for the premises at all times including compliance with the terms of the 2003 Act and conditions attached to the premises licence to promote the licensing objectives.

Authorisation by personal licence holders

10.29 In addition, every premises licence that authorises the sale of alcohol must require that every supply of alcohol under the premises licence must be made or authorised by a person who holds a personal licence. This in most instances will be the designated premises supervisor who must hold a valid personal licence. Any premises at which alcohol is sold or supplied may employ one or more personal licence holders. This does not mean that the condition should require the presence of the designated premises supervisor or any other personal licence holder on the premises at all times.

10.30 Similarly, the fact that every supply of alcohol must be made under the authority of a personal licence holder does not mean that only personal licence holders can make sales or that they must be personally present at every transaction. A personal licence holder may authorise members of staff to make sales of alcohol but may be absent at times from the premises when a transaction takes place. However, the responsible personal licence holder may not be able to escape responsibility for the actions of anyone authorised to make sales.

10.31 “Authorisation” does not imply direct supervision by a personal licence holder of each sale of alcohol. The question arises as to how sales can be authorised. Ultimately, whether an authorisation has been given is a question of fact that would have to be decided by the courts on the evidence before it in the course of a criminal prosecution.

10.32 The following factors should be relevant in considering whether or not an authorisation has been given:

- the person(s) authorised to sell alcohol at any particular premises should be clearly identified;
- the authorisation should have specified the acts which may be carried out by the person who is authorised to supply alcohol;
- there should be an overt act of authorisation, for example, a specific written statement given to the individual who is authorised to supply alcohol; and
- there should be in place sensible arrangements for the personal licence holder to monitor the activity that they have authorised on a reasonably regular basis.

10.33 It is strongly recommended that personal licence holders give specific written authorisations to individuals whom they are authorising to retail alcohol. A single written authorisation would be sufficient to cover multiple sales over an unlimited period. This would assist personal licence holders in demonstrating due diligence should issues arise with enforcement authorities; and would protect employees if they themselves are challenged in respect of their authority to sell alcohol.

10.34 Written authorisation is not a requirement of the 2003 Act and its absence alone could not give rise to enforcement action.

10.35 It must be remembered that while the designated premises supervisor or a personal licence holder may authorise other individuals to sell alcohol in their absence, they are responsible for any sales that may be made. Similarly, the premises licence holder remains responsible for ensuring that licensing law and licence conditions are observed at the premises.

The Review process

11.1 The proceedings set out in the 2003 Act for reviewing premises licences and club premises certificates represent a key protection for the community where problems associated with the licensing objectives occur after the grant or variation of a premises licence or club premises certificate.

11.2 At any stage, following the grant of a premises licence or club premises certificate, a responsible authority, or any other person, may ask the licensing authority to review the licence or certificate because of a matter arising at the premises in connection with any of the four licensing objectives.

Powers of a licensing authority on the determination of a review

11.6 Where the relevant licensing authority does act as a responsible authority and applies for a review, it is important that a separation of responsibilities is still achieved in this process to ensure procedural fairness and eliminate conflicts of interest. As outlined previously in Chapter 9 of this Guidance, the distinct functions of acting as licensing authority and responsible authority should be exercised by different officials to ensure a separation of responsibilities.

11.10 Where authorised persons and responsible authorities have concerns about problems identified at premises, it is good practice for them to give licence holders early warning of their concerns and the need for improvement, and where possible they should advise the licence or certificate holder of the steps they need to take to address those concerns. A failure by the holder to respond to such warnings is expected to lead to a decision to apply for a review. Co-operation at a local level in promoting the licensing objectives should be encouraged and reviews should not be used to undermine this co-operation.

11.16 The 2003 Act provides a range of powers for the licensing authority which it may exercise on determining a review where it considers them appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives.

11.17 The licensing authority may decide that the review does not require it to take any further steps appropriate to promoting the licensing objectives. In addition, there is nothing to prevent a licensing authority issuing an informal warning to the licence holder and/or to recommend improvement within a particular period of time. It is expected that licensing authorities will regard such informal warnings as an important mechanism for ensuring that the licensing objectives are effectively promoted and

that warnings should be issued in writing to the licence holder.

11.18 However, where responsible authorities such as the police or environmental health officers have already issued warnings requiring improvement - either orally or in writing - that have failed as part of their own stepped approach to address concerns, licensing authorities should not merely repeat that approach and should take this into account when considering what further action is appropriate. Similarly, licensing authorities may take into account any civil immigration penalties which a licence holder has been required to pay for employing an illegal worker.

Reviews arising in connection with crime

11.24 A number of reviews may arise in connection with crime that is not directly connected with licensable activities. For example, reviews may arise because of drugs problems at the premises, money laundering by criminal gangs, the sale of contraband or stolen goods, the sale of firearms, or the sexual exploitation of children. Licensing authorities do not have the power to judge the criminality or otherwise of any issue. This is a matter for the courts. The licensing authority's role when determining such a review is not therefore to establish the guilt or innocence of any individual but to ensure the promotion of the crime prevention objective.

11.25 Reviews are part of the regulatory process introduced by the 2003 Act and they are not part of criminal law and procedure. There is, therefore, no reason why representations giving rise to a review of a premises licence need be delayed pending the outcome of any criminal proceedings. Some reviews will arise after the conviction in the criminal courts of certain individuals, but not all. In any case, it is for the licensing authority to determine whether the problems associated with the alleged crimes are taking place on the premises and affecting the promotion of the licensing objectives. Where a review follows a conviction, it would also not be for the licensing authority to attempt to go beyond any finding by the courts, which should be treated as a matter of undisputed evidence before them.

11.26 Where the licensing authority is conducting a review on the grounds that the premises have been used for criminal purposes, its role is solely to determine what steps should be taken in connection with the premises licence, for the promotion of the crime prevention objective. It is important to recognise that certain criminal activity or associated problems may be taking place or have taken place despite the best efforts of the licence holder and the staff working at the premises and despite full compliance with the conditions attached to the licence. In such circumstances, the licensing authority is still empowered to take any appropriate steps to remedy the problems. The licensing authority's duty is to take steps with a view to the promotion of the licensing objectives and the prevention of illegal working in the interests of the wider community and not those of the individual licence holder.

As such the current Secretary of State's Section 182 Guidance pursuant to the Licensing Act 2003 specifically deals with this in Section 11.29, and outlines the following:

"The Government recognises that the majority of licensed premises operate responsibly and undertake due diligence checks on those who appear to be under the age of 18 at the point of sale (or 21 and 25 where they operate a Challenge 21 or 25 scheme). Where these systems are in place, licensing authorities may wish to take a proportionate approach in cases where there have been two sales of alcohol within very quick succession of one another (e.g., where a new cashier has not followed policy and conformed with a store's age verification procedures). However, where

persistent sales of alcohol to children have occurred at premises, and it is apparent that those managing the premises do not operate a responsible policy or have not exercised appropriate due diligence, responsible authorities should consider taking steps to ensure that a review of the licence is the norm in these circumstances”.

Furthermore the current Reading Borough Council statement of Licensing Policy states:

1.2 The Council must have regard to the four licensing objectives when carrying out its functions under the Licensing Act 2003. The Licensing Authority will also have regard to other Council policies which have been introduced to tackle issues that may undermine crime and disorder or any of the other licensing objectives. The Licensing Authority will have regard to the contents of this policy as well as the Secretary of State's Guidance issued under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003. It may also depart from this policy and the Secretary of State's Guidance if there are exceptional circumstances and it is appropriate to do so to promote the licensing objectives. If the Licensing Authority departs from the Secretary of State's Guidance it will give reasons as per paragraph 1.9 of that guidance.

1.3 The legislation also supports other key aims and purposes. These are outlined in paragraph 1.5 of the guidance and should be principal aims for all parties involved in licensing for the promotion of the licensing objectives. The licensing authority will have regard to these key aims in its decision making. They are:

- Protecting the public and local residents from crime, anti social behaviour and noise nuisance associated and caused by irresponsible licensed premises;
- Giving the police and licensing authorities the powers they need to effectively manage and police the night time economy and take action against those premises that are causing problems;
- Recognising the important role which pubs and other licensed premises play in our local communities by minimising the regulatory burden on business, encouraging innovation and supporting responsible premises;
- Providing a regulatory framework for alcohol which reflects the needs of local communities and empowers local authorities to make and enforce decisions about the most appropriate licensing strategies for their local area;
- Encouraging greater community involvement in licensing decisions and giving local residents the opportunity to have their say regarding licensing decisions that may affect them.

1.4 The Council has shaped its policies in line with the aims stated previously. The Licensing Authority will also have regard to other policies, strategies and initiatives that have been adopted to promote the licensing objectives. Such policies include a 'Reducing the Strength' initiative to tackle the consumption of super strength beers and ciders (above 6.5 of super strength products has been shown to undermine the licensing objectives and cause anti social behaviour - as well as being damaging to health. Other policies, initiatives and strategies which will be taken into account may include the Council's Drug and Alcohol policy as well as policies to do with general health and wellbeing and public health. The

Council also places the highest priority when dealing with the potential exploitation of children and vulnerable people - whether that is through their attendance at licensed premises or their employment at those premises. The licensing authority would expect all licence holders and everyone involved in licensing to take cognisance of these

policies, strategies and initiatives.

1.5 This licensing policy aims to make Reading's night time economy an economy for all. A diverse range of responsibly run premises are to be encouraged. The licensing authority wishes to discourage drunkenness and a move away from alcohol led vertical drinking establishments. We would expect responsibly run premises to actively promote the licensing objectives through promoting extra seating at their premises; instigating effective dispersal from their premises at the conclusion of licensable activities and engagement with the licensing authority and other responsible authorities in policies, initiatives and strategies that promote Reading as a safe, healthy, diverse and vibrant night time economy suitable for all.

1.6 The predominantly urban nature of Reading as a town means that an appropriate balance needs to be struck between the needs of local business and the needs of local residents. This licensing policy seeks to encourage all stakeholders to engage in the licensing process so that the needs of all can be taken into account and issues dealt with in a spirit of partnership and cooperation.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

3.2 This Act requires local authorities and other bodies to consider crime and disorder reduction. Section 17 of the Act states that it shall be the duty of each authority, to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that is reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area (including anti social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment). This links specifically with the licensing objective of prevention of crime and disorder and the licensing authority will take into account all reasonable measures that actively promote this licensing objective.

8.17 The Authority carries out joint test purchasing operations with other responsible authorities such as Thames Valley Police and Trading Standards as well as the Community Alcohol Partnership officer. Test purchasing operations will also be carried out to ensure that licensed premises are adhering to their age verification policy as per the mandatory conditions attached to all licences that sell alcohol.

8.18 Where a licensed premises is found to have sold alcohol to a child under the age of 18 years of age then the authority will look to take immediate remedial action against that premises and that licence holder. Similarly, if a premises is found to be selling alcohol in breach of its licence conditions or the mandatory conditions, those are offences which the authority deems to be particularly serious and will look to take action to prevent a reoccurrence.

9. Enforcement - General Principles

9.1 It is the responsibility under the Act for all responsible authorities; licence holders and prospective licence holders to actively promote the four licensing objectives. The Council along with partner agencies, has a wider responsibility to protect the public as a whole and prevent crime, harm or nuisance from taking place.

9.2 The Authority will carry out its licensing functions with a view to actively promoting the licensing objectives and maintaining public safety. This applies to the dual role the licensing authority has both as the administrator of the process and as a responsible authority.

9.3 The Licensing Authority has previously and will continue to work with other responsible authorities and partner agencies in order to ensure that the licensing

objectives are promoted and that a consistent and joined up approach is taken to enforcement across Reading.

9.4 Reading Borough Council and Thames Valley Police work in partnership when carrying out work that involves licensed premises and any matter that undermines the licensing objectives. The Authority and Thames Valley Police also work in partnership with colleagues in the Home Office Immigration Enforcement team and Trading Standards on a variety of issues including the prevention and detection of illegal working in licensed premises and issues surrounding super strength alcoholic products and responsible alcohol retailing.

9.5 The Licensing Authority, Trading Standards and Thames Valley Police have established a regular partnership group to discuss and identify issues arising from licensed premises and to decide what, if any, enforcement action should be taken against any such premises. The partnership group is often attended by other colleagues so as to provide the widest possible, joined up approach to tackling issues in relation to licensed premises. It is the authority's view that issues are best tackled, whenever practicable, through this joined up approach as it provides consistency and a best practice approach to dealing with licensing issues.

9.8 It is the Authority's view that the sale of alcohol or other age restricted products to children is completely unacceptable. The Authority will work with colleagues in Thames Valley Police, Trading Standards and the Community Alcohol Partnership to regularly carry out test purchases on licensed premises. The sale of alcohol to children is an offence under the Act. Any premises or licence holder that is found to be selling alcohol to children is likely to have enforcement taken against them.

9.9 A further offence of persistently selling alcohol to children has also been inserted into the Licensing Act 2003. This is defined as alcohol being sold to a child on two occasions within a period of three consecutive months. Any premises that is found to be persistently selling alcohol to children will, as per the Secretary of State's Guidance at paragraph 11.30, have that premises licence reviewed with a view to having it revoked.

9.10 As well as test purchasing exercises being undertaken to establish whether alcohol is being sold to children, test purchasing exercises will also be carried out to ascertain whether a premises is adhering to its age verification policy. Most licences will have a condition stating what the premises' age verification policy should be. Further, the mandatory conditions on all premises licences that authorise the sale of alcohol clearly state that each premises must implement an age verification policy and that all sales must be carried out in accordance with that policy. Therefore, if a premises operates a Challenge 25 policy and only accepts certain photographic ID, then they will be tested to see that this is being done. It is the Authority's view that a Challenge 25 age verification policy should be adopted as best practice with only nationally accredited photo ID being acceptable as proof of age. Any premises found to be selling alcohol not in accordance with their own adopted age verification policy will be committing an offence which could lead to enforcement action being taken to prevent a reoccurrence.

Inspections

9.6 The Authority will carry out inspections at all premises where a premises licence is in force. Additionally, an inspection may also be carried out where an application for a grant, variation or review is received by the Authority to ascertain the likely effect of granting any application on the promotion of the licensing objectives. Inspections may also be carried out if the Authority or one of our partner agencies/responsible authorities are made aware of complaints or other incidents that undermine the promotion of the

licensing objectives.

9.7 Inspections will be carried out solely by the Licensing Authority or in conjunction with other partners such as Thames Valley Police, Home Office Immigration Enforcement and Trading Standards.

Test Purchasing

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9.11 Further offences in relation to children and alcohol are listed at paragraph 8.15 of this policy and licence holders are expected to be aware of these and to undertake due diligence to prevent these serious crimes occurring. All premises that sell alcohol are expected to have robust systems in place to ensure alcohol is not sold to children.

Enforcement Approach

9.12 Where offences are found to have been carried out on licensed premises, the Authority has a number of enforcement options available to it. The Authority will work with partner agencies to determine which enforcement option is appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives. The seriousness of the offences found will be taken into consideration as well as any previous issues of non compliance or criminality that have taken place at the licensed premises.

9.13 The enforcement options available to the Authority are wide-ranging. The Authority may consider, for example, that a letter detailing the issues found during an inspection followed by a period of time to rectify them is sufficient to promote the licensing objectives. Similarly, the Authority may consider that the breaches are sufficiently serious to warrant an immediate performance meeting with a licence holder so that a discussion can take place about the adequacy of the processes in place at the premises. This could, for example, lead to recommendations being put to the licence holder to

implement much more robust conditions and processes to avoid a repeat of the breaches found. The authority may also decide to prosecute relevant persons for offences being carried out on licensed premises. Licence holders should note that the authority can take one or more of these options available to it at the same time for the same offences should it be deemed appropriate to do so.

9.15 Licensed premises that have a history of non-compliance over a period of months and years and/or incidents of serious crime taking place at that premises, will likely find that the Authority will initiate a review with a view to asking for the licence to be considered for revocation.

9.16 When considering what enforcement action to take, the Authority will always consider what is the most appropriate and proportionate step to promote the licensing objectives. The Authority is not required to wait for offences to occur before deciding it needs to take appropriate action. Case law - notably *East Lindsey District Council v Abu Hanif* - states that the promotion of the licensing objectives requires a prospective consideration of what is warranted in the public interest having regard to the twin considerations of prevention and deterrence. Similarly, the Secretary of State's Guidance to the Licensing Act makes clear that there is no requirement for the Authority to wait for the outcome of any criminal proceedings before it initiates any enforcement action. This is the approach that the Authority will take when considering what, if any, action should be taken when condition breaches and other criminal activity is found at licensed premises.

9.18 Any responsible authority or person defined as 'any other person' within the Act can initiate a review of any premises licence or club premises certificate. When another responsible authority or other person initiates a review, the Authority will deal with it as the Licensing Authority and may also wish to make representation in support of the review within its role as a responsible authority if it has relevant information.

9.19 Licensed premises that are found to be compliant and which do little to undermine the promotion of the licensing objectives will be deemed as a much lower risk than premises that breach conditions, carry on serious criminal activity and generate complaints.

9.20 The Authority shall endeavour to work with licence holders and applicants where it is believed that steps can be taken to rectify issues identified at licensed premises. However it can not merely continue that approach if it has previously failed or the licence holder is unresponsive. It is the responsibility of all licence holders and responsible authorities to ensure that licensed premises are not undermining the promotion of the licensing objectives and that licensable activity is carried out lawfully. The Authority will work with partners to determine what action is appropriate for each premises where issues are discovered. Each premises and the action required for each will be assessed on its own individual merits.

9.21 The Council, in determining a review application can take the following steps in order to promote the licensing objectives:

- modify the conditions on the licence
- exclude a licensable activity from the scope of the licence
- remove the designated premises supervisor
- suspend the licence for a period not exceeding three months
- revoke the premises licence

Summary

The offences clearly outlined in this review application are particularly serious. The sale of alcohol to children has serious impacts on society and can in certain circumstances lead to child crime exploitation, anti-social behaviour and negative impacts on the health and well-being of children. The lack of response of Mr Parmar, the premises licence holder and designated premises supervisor to the two underage test purchase failures and by the failings found during the inspection suggest that Mr Parmar does not have the prerequisites required for responsible retailing of alcohol. The guidance is clear on this matter, if a premises is found to be selling alcohol in breach of its licence conditions or the mandatory conditions, those are offences which the authority deems to be particularly serious and will look to take action to prevent a reoccurrence, and as such, the Responsible Authority recommend the revocation of the premises licence.

Case law

High Court case (case stated) of East Lindsey DC v Abu Hanif

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