



City of Westminster

Licensing Committee Report

Meeting:	<i>Licensing Committee</i>
Date:	<i>Wednesday 22nd March 2017</i>
Classification:	<i>For General Release</i>
Title:	<i>Developing a vision for the evening and night time economy in Westminster</i>
Wards Affected:	<i>All</i>
Financial Summary:	<i>N/A</i>
Report of:	<i>Director of Policy, Performance and Communications</i>

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. City for All 2017/18 contains a commitment to ‘set out a clear vision and plan for our night time economy, to promote the interests of residents, businesses and visitors’.
- 1.2. In order to deliver this commitment, the Council intends to develop a publishable document that sets out Westminster’s vision for the Evening and Night Time Economy in the city and a framework for delivery against that vision, including links to a range of existing policy and operational tools.
- 1.3. As part of early discussions, Members have given a steer that the process for developing the vision and plan should be as open and engaging as possible. This will include engagement with Members, residents groups, industry and other key stakeholders such as the Metropolitan Police.
- 1.4. The evening and night time economy is not exclusively a licensing matter and as much consideration will be given to how non-licensable activity can be supported as to how this impacts on licensed premises. Nevertheless, the crossovers with licensing are clearly substantial and the Licensing Committee are therefore being engaged early to help shape the process and thinking.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to provide views on key issues in the evening and night time economy

2.2. The Committee is asked to note that further engagement will take place with Members and stakeholders and provide views on how best to secure a rounded debate on a complex and potentially contentious subject.

3. Context

3.1. The Council does not currently have a clearly articulated vision and plan for the evening and night time economy as a whole. This has been identified as a gap and the Council has committed to addressing this as part of City for All: 2017/18.

3.2. The development of such a vision will allow the Council to proactively address many of the challenges that are currently the subject of national debate and also express what being a 24 hour city means in a sovereign Westminster context. This is open for discussion but does not necessarily mean later opening hours for licensed premises and could instead articulate how the city is already 24 hours due to the continual cycle of street cleansing, transportation and other features that have existed for many years.

3.3. A strategic plan would also have to take account of a number of external factors.

The national and international narrative around trends in the night time economy

3.4. There are regularly national and international reports on the trends in licensed premises. The conclusion of most recent studies appears to be that 'traditional' forms of nightlife and entertainment are in decline, but there are new, exciting offers emerging which pose challenges for both the industry and those that regulate it. Most notably this has involved merging together of different types of offer such as music with food and drink or alcohol with retail.

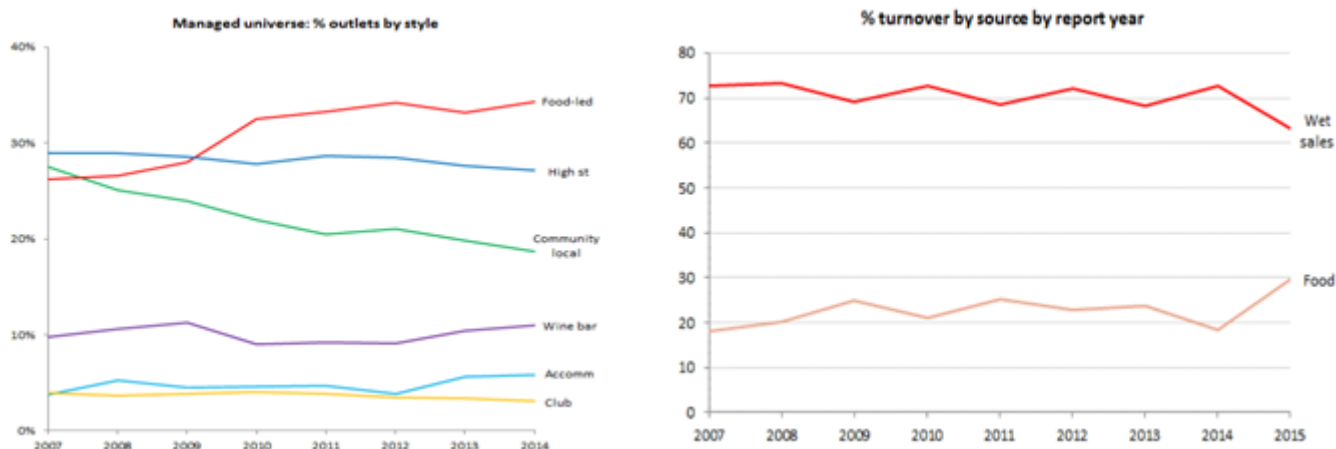
3.5. In March 2016 there were 210,000 premises licences in England and Wales, an increase of 3% (up 5,500) compared with March 2014 (Home Office statistics).

3.6. In January 2017, the Local Data Company released figures that show a growth in cafes and fast food (up 9% between 2011 and 2016) at the expense of traditional bars, pubs and night clubs (down 9%).

3.7. The British Beer and Pub Association have reported that the UK consumed an average of 9.4 litres of alcohol per adult (15+) in 2014, down 19% from the 2004 peak and 10% lower than 2000.

3.8. In 2016, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) updated the basket of goods and services that are used to calculate inflation to remove nightclub entry fees. This was based on the fact that fewer nightclubs charge entry fees but also 'as a reflection of the nation's changing tastes'.

3.9. The Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers (ALMR) reported that food-led activity was growing at the expense of alcohol-sales (see below tables).



3.10. This national trend is reflected in Westminster as we have seen an upward trend in the number of license applications received for restaurants and cafes (from 178 in 2012 to 304 in 2016). The number of applications received for pubs, bars and night clubs has been somewhat more variable with 85 in 2012, a peak of 167 in 2014 and decline to 99 in 2016 (Westminster Licensing statistics)

The Mayor of London's ambitions and position

- 3.11. The Mayor of London is openly supportive of the Night Time Economy and has appointed Amy Lamé as 'Night Czar' and Philip Kolvin QC and Chairman of the Night Time Commission.
- 3.12. The Mayor's ambition is to 'make London a 24-hour city that's open to all', and early discussion indicate that this involves opportunities to spread the concentration of night time activity beyond traditional areas such as the West End and diversify away from alcohol-led activity.
- 3.13. On this basis, the Mayor is committed to developing a vision and strategy for the night time economy across London. Westminster is only one borough within London but our night time economy remains by far and away the biggest in the country and it is therefore crucial that our local perspective influences and aligns with the Mayor's ambitions where possible in the long-term.

4. Westminster's current position and need for engagement

4.1. In 2015, Westminster published two studies of the Evening and Night Time Economy, one provided a cost-benefit analysis and the other provided a behavioural study in 10 locations across the city¹. As part of this, it was recommended that the Council should adopt a stronger approach to strategic leadership on the evening and night time economy.

¹ <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/evening-and-night-time-economy>

- 4.2. At present, the closest we come to a plan or a strategy is the history and policies set out in the Statement of Licensing Policy. This sets out a balanced approach which promotes growth whilst protecting residential and other interests which compete for use of the city. It also emphasises the importance of partnership working with the Police, the industry and residents.
- 4.3. The most notable strategic position we adopt, is to encourage change in the composition of Westminster's evening and night-time economy so that it becomes more widely based and less dominated by alcohol led premises. We attempt to do this by encouraging premises to include more seating and allow for order food by table service, rather than open bar space which caters for high volume vertical drinking. This is consistent with national policy as set out by the Home Office.
- 4.4. Our approach is also market-led and we do not seek to use licensing to protect certain types of premises from failure as a result of changing consumer demands. This is particularly important in any debate about why there are declining numbers of nightclubs.
- 4.5. The development of a wider strategic plan will build on the principles outlined in the Statement of Licensing Policy and provide the Council with a clear statement of what Westminster City Council wants from the night time economy and how we might work to facilitate and deliver this.
- 4.6. Such a plan will inevitably cover more areas of policy and operation than licensing. We have a number of key 'levers' at our disposal in the implementation of a wider night time economy plan including, but not limited to:
- Statement of Licensing Policy and the licensing decision making process
 - City Plan and the planning decision making process
 - Compliance and enforcement activity
 - Licensing Charter pilot in HOLBA area
 - Communications campaigns
 - City promotions and events
 - Economic development
 - Place-shaping and physical design of public space
 - Waste collection and street cleansing
- 4.7. This will therefore require a significant amount of cross-Council collaboration and consensus building amongst stakeholders. The Licensing Committee and indeed all Members have a critical role to play in shaping this agenda.
- 4.8. Efforts will also be made to engage residents through the Council's Open Forum platform and undertake direct engagement with the industry and other stakeholders through the Westminster Entertainment Forum (WEF) and in direct dialogue where appropriate.
- 4.9. An initial look across the Council's key policy and operational approaches to the evening and night time economy, suggests the following key principles as a basis for discussion:

- We protect established residential communities from negative impacts
- We work with market trends rather than against them and promote diversification away from alcohol-led activity
- A safe night time economy is an attractive and profitable night time economy
- We balance the competing demands of residents and businesses
- We work in partnership (with the police, industry and others) to achieve our aims
- Any changes or growth in the night time economy in the night time economy have to be supported with infrastructure or service improvements to mitigate impact on residents, this includes funding.

4.10. These are consistent with the priorities of City for All: 2017/18 to show civic leadership and responsibility, promote opportunity and fairness and set the standards for a world class Westminster:

5. Financial Implications

5.1. There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

6. Legal Implications

6.1. There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

7. Staffing Implications

7.1. There are no staffing implications as a result of this report.

8. Reason for Decision

8.1. The proposals and issues set out in this report contribute to the delivery of a key City For All commitment.

9. If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect one of the background papers please contact Richard Cressey, Principal Police Officer on 020 7641 3403 or via email rcressey@westminster.gov.uk.