

Council Meeting: 13 July 2016

Briefing Note

Subject: Westminster Licensing Standard

As part of its City for All: Year Two programme, Westminster City Council set out an ambition to introduce a voluntary 'Westminster Standard' which promotes responsible behaviour amongst licensees and sets the standard in terms of caring for the welfare of their patrons and being good neighbours.

The specific objectives are:

- Premises are better able to support vulnerable individuals in and around their premises
- Reductions in associated anti-social behaviour and crime
- Night Time Economy supported to grow responsibly
- Improved working relationship between council, police and industry and improved perception of the council amongst key operators.

It is considered vital that the initiative is industry-led and, as such, a roundtable was held with a selection of industry organisations on 25th May 2016. The key feedback from this roundtable is as follows¹:

- Focus on vulnerability and premises improving support for those who may have drunk too much
- Must be industry-led
- Possibility of a more responsive and naturally lighter touch approach to enforcement for those signed up to a Standard could be an incentive to sign up. Also possibly more flexibility around TENs or license variations.
- The process for identification of problem premises could be revised with a move away from pure crime statistics and towards an understanding of the quality and type of the operator.
- Clear agreement that a Standard needs to be voluntary and partnership based rather than delivered through compulsion or conditions.
- Need to involve SIA (Security Industry Authority) companies in the further development of the Standard.

¹ Note - this is not agreed policy, it is balanced feedback from the industry on how a Standard could work.

- There are a number of different schemes already in existence e.g. Best Bar None and the most practical approach may be to introduce more of these and then 'knitting' them together more effectively to suit Westminster's unique needs.
- Recognition that different types of premises will require different types of commitments and it may be easier to focus on areas where all premises share in the success or failure of that space e.g. Leicester Square and Soho. We may want to pilot an approach.

On the back of the roundtable, it is proposed that the Council work with industry to pilot such an approach in two small areas of Westminster where we can engage a diverse range of premises whilst retaining an absolute focus on tackling intoxication and vulnerability. Options for pilot areas are currently being worked up.

Both areas should be characterised by a concentration of late night premises alongside other licensed premises including restaurants, pubs/bars and late-night refreshment venues.

It will be important to map schemes already operating in each area e.g. Pub Watch, Club Angels, Safe Spaces, Street Pastors etc. and possibly involve Best Bar None in the design and monitoring of both schemes.

The next steps are to confirm which areas are most appropriate to hold pilots in, approach key partners in the pilot areas to co-host a follow-up roundtable with individual operators and pose question to operators about how they want to set the area standard in caring for patrons and being good neighbours.