



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Licensing Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Licensing Committee** held on **Wednesday 22nd March, 2023**, Rooms 18.01 - 18.03 - 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Aziz Toki (Chair), Maggie Carman (Vice-Chair), Concia Albert, Melvyn Caplan, Md Shamsed Chowdhury, Robert Eagleton, Jim Glen, Iman Less, Tim Mitchell, Angela Piddock, Judith Southern and Jacqui Wilkinson

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Councillors Laila Cunningham, Louise Hyams and Caroline Sargent.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

3.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on Wednesday 23 November 2022 were signed as a correct record of proceedings.

4 THE PERFORMANCE OF THE LICENSING SERVICE

- 4.1 The Head of Service for Licensing and Regulatory Services introduced a report setting out an overview of the performance of the Licensing Service and detailing how over the last two financial years there had been a slight upward shift in the number of applications received. It was explained how the numbers this financial year were comparable to last year's figures with 9506 and 9363 applications received respectively.

4.2 The Committee heard about the types of regimes and applications handled by the Licensing Service, team performance, significant trends and high-profile events such as the King's Coronation.

4.3 The Committee discussed:

- Pavement Licences and Tables and Chairs Licences – Members were interested to learn how changes in leadership in central government had caused a delay in the consideration of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which would make pavement licensing the permanent licensing regime for alfresco dining and the placement of furniture on the highway. The Committee was informed that the Bill was now at the Committee Stage in the House of Lords and it was hoped that this would receive Royal Assent by the Autumn of 2023. The Business & Planning Act was currently scheduled to expire on 30 September 2023.
- Team Performance - The Licensing Service had an internal key performance indicator of processing applications within 2 working days of receipt. The Committee was pleased to note that over the last 2 financial years, more than 97% of applications had been processed within this deadline.
- RSPCA Paw Print Awards – Members also expressed their congratulations to the service for once again being successful in obtaining a silver award for its animal licensing regimes, which related to the management of animal welfare.
- Licensing Applications Backlog – Members were keen to learn more about the status of the backlog in applications and was informed that there had been a backlog due to the pandemic which had caused a significant impact on the number of cases that could be listed at each Sub-Committee meeting. It was explained that the backlog of cases had caused issues for not only the operators who were trying to open during difficult times, but also put a strain on resources for the Service trying to get back on track after the restrictions were lifted. Thankfully, with the support of the Chair of Licensing and the Committee Members and working with colleagues in Committee Services and Legal, the backlog had been cleared and the Service was back to meeting statutory timeframes and determining cases at Sub-Committees within the required periods.
- New IT – The Committee was interested to learn that the Street Trading team continued to work with Farthest Gate Limited on the design and implementation of new licensing software, Liberator. Recent developments were detailed including the creation of an entirely new online booking system for casual trading. This was a bespoke design for Westminster City Council that allowed casual traders to book their own casual pitches and manage their own accounts.

4.4 The Committee congratulated the Licensing Service on maintaining its high performance and in clearing the backlog of licensing cases.

4.5 **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

5 UPDATE OF LICENSING APPEALS

5.1 The Committee received a report from the Principal Licensing Solicitor which provided a summary of the status of the appeals being dealt with. The Committee noted the summary which included details of the four appeals that Legal Services had been dealing with since November 2022, two of which have been withdrawn, one which could not be pursued and one which was pending determination.

5.2 The Committee heard that the pending appeal was regarding Greggs PLC who had applied for a premises licence to permit the late-night supply of hot food and drinks from 23:00 hours to 05:00 hours the following day, seven days a week in the heart of Leicester Square. It was explained that the Sub-Committee had refused to grant the application on policy grounds stating that the Appellant had failed to demonstrate exceptional reasons as to why the application would not have a negative impact on the West End Cumulative Impact Zone and the promotion of the licensing objectives. The Committee noted that further details of the outcome of this appeal would be provided once it had been dealt with.

5.3 **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted. The Committee thanked Legal Officers for all their work in dealing with the appeals.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 The Chair requested that the Committee receive an update at its next meeting regarding the progress of any amendments to licensing policies.

The Meeting ended at 7.02pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____