

LOCAL LICENSING FORUM

ABERDEEN, 22 April 2025. Minute of Meeting of the LOCAL LICENSING FORUM. Present:- Elaine Mottram, William Rae, Danuta Dobrzanska, Grant, Steve, Stewart, Pete Turner, JP McGivney, Karen Gatherum and Scott Forrest

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1. The Chairperson welcomed all those in attendance to the Local Licensing Forum meeting, including new member Scott Forrest and Laura McGhee, a Solicitor within Licensing.

The Clerk informed the Forum that apologies for absence had been submitted by Finlay Cran, Artur Ghazaryan, Phil Mackie and Barry Stephen.

The Forum resolved:-
to note the apologies.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 11 FEBRUARY 2025

2. The Forum reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting held on 11 February 2025.

With reference to Article 8, JP McGivney clarified that instead of stating there was an increase of 19% compared to the previous year, it should be noted that there was actually a decrease of 19% compared to the previous year.

The Forum resolved:-
(i) to note the update provided; and
(ii) to otherwise approve the minute.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

3. The Chairperson provided the Forum with an update on membership status, highlighting the following:-

- Grant Wiseman, a member from Adult Social Services, had not attended any meetings. Due to his lack of response, the Chairperson requested his removal from the Forum;
- Barry Stephen, a member from Adult Social Services, had engaged in multiple emails with the Chairperson. He invited her to attend one of their meetings to discuss a way forward;
- Lucy Simpson, a former representative for the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, had left the Forum. Efforts were currently underway to find a suitable replacement for her position; and
- discussions continued regarding a new Young Person Representative, with the Chairperson currently liaising with Brian Webb regarding the possibility of someone attending from the Scottish Youth Parliament.

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The Forum resolved:-

- (i) to note the membership update;
- (ii) to note that Grant Wiseman would be removed from the Local Licensing Forum with immediate effect; and
- (iii) to acknowledge that the Chairperson would continue to liaise with her contacts regarding the on-going appointment of replacement representatives.

FOOTFALL SURVEY (JP MCGIVNEY)

4. The Forum received an update from JP McGivney regarding the footfall survey. He stated that progress had stalled due to a lack of responses from other venues however, the recruitment of Scott Forrest was expected to aid in this effort. Mr McGivney expressed his intention to provide a more comprehensive overview, but the limited data had posed challenges.

Key points from the discussion included that:-

- many venues were hesitant to share data to the footfall survey due to financial stress, fearing negative implications;
- currently six responses had been received, with the total potentially reaching eight or nine. Mr McGivney planned to compile this data into a report for the next meeting;
- a notable example was shared in relation to the decline in attendance about a key brand that previously attracted 600-700 attendees on Thursdays at the Tunnels, which had now dropped to just 70-100, leading to the brand's discontinuation after seven successful years;
- the closure of "CarWash Tuesdays," a popular event that drew 600-800 attendees for 12 years, highlighted the broader challenges faced by venues;
- many well-known venues had cut their operating days to three or four times a week, an unprecedented move for such brands;
- whilst violence associated with licensed premises had decreased, concerns about street drinkers and youth disturbances persist, with young people congregating in fast-food outlets contributing to anti-social behaviour;
- the easy access to alcohol from supermarkets was seen as a primary driver of harm, with calls for stricter regulations to reduce underage access and shoplifting; and
- there was a shift towards private consumption rather than social drinking in licensed venues, raising concerns about the impact on community dynamics and the need for venues to adapt.

Scott Forrest advised the Forum that the issues faced in Aberdeen were not mirrored in Glasgow, where a 2,000-capacity venue could be filled weekly, whilst Aberdeen struggled to attract 200 attendees. In conclusion he emphasised that the report would aim to capture the comprehensive picture of these changes, acknowledging that the decline in nightlife was influenced by multiple factors beyond cultural shifts.

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The discussion ended with a commitment from the Forum to further explore football dynamics and patron behaviour, with an interest in comparing Aberdeen's situation to Glasgow's.

The Forum resolved:-

to note that Mr McGivney would provide a more comprehensive overview at the next meeting.

NIGHT-TIME TRANSPORT ISSUES WITH AN UPDATE ON THE TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE GROUP

5. The Chairperson reminded the Forum that during the last joint Local Licensing Forum and Licensing Board meeting, Councillor Al-Samarai discussed taxis and transport issues and expressed her willingness to engage further on the topic. Following this, the Forum successfully made contact with her for a meeting. Councillor Al-Samarai shared her perspective that there was currently no opposition to Uber however, existing policy did not permit drivers who had not completed the street knowledge test. She advised the Forum to prepare and contribute to the upcoming review of the policy, although a specific date for this review had not yet been established.

The Forum engaged in an extensive discussion regarding night-time transport, addressing various aspects and concerns related to transportation options during late hours.

The Forum resolved:-

to note that it would be worthwhile for the Local Licensing Forum to make representation to the review of the Taxi and Private Hire Consultation Group Policy once available.

ELEPHANT STUDY UPDATE

6. The Chairperson introduced the ELEPHANT Study Progress Update, a research initiative by Stirling University focused on evaluating extended alcohol premises hours within the night-time economy in Glasgow and Aberdeen. The study commenced before the COVID-19 pandemic, with ongoing updates provided.

She expressed concern about the most recent report, which outlined seven areas of focus, indicating that findings would be submitted to academic journals or presented at conferences. This raised the issue that stakeholders may need to conduct their own research to access relevant results for informed decision-making.

The Chairperson acknowledged the vital role of Aberdeen stakeholders in the study's development, including their contributions in identifying focus groups and participating in discussions. She advocated for a report that clearly presented findings relevant to Aberdeen, ideally with a comparison to Glasgow, though she noted that such

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comparisons may be complicated due to differing approaches. Ultimately, she emphasised the need for an accessible report that allowed stakeholders to understand the study's impact effectively.

The Forum resolved:-

- (i) to acknowledge the Progress Update on the ELEPHANT Study; and
- (ii) to note that the Chairperson would follow up the report with Niamh Fitzgerald, Stirling University for further clarification on the report's findings and implications.

AOCB

7. The Chairperson provided an update on the National Network of Local Licensing Forums, noting efforts to compile a list of contacts across various forums in Scotland. This task had proven to be challenging, as not all forums were currently operational or had an appointed Chairperson. She mentioned that there had been discussions in relation to the possibility of forming a small group of active forums to facilitate discussions.

During a previous meeting, the Forum identified several needs for improvement, including support for an IT system, early notifications of national initiatives/events, and funding for attendance. The Chairperson highlighted that there had not been a National Network meeting in the past two years, although she maintained a good connection with Jim Wilson, with whom she communicated with every three months.

Established under the Licensing Act 2005, the forums had not received support or training, resulting in limited networking opportunities to share best practices.

The Forum resolved:-

- (i) to acknowledge the update on the National Network of Local Licensing Forums; and
- (ii) to note that the Chairperson would continue to liaise with Jim Wilson and provide updates to the Forum as they became available.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 17 JUNE 2025

8. The Forum was informed that the next meeting would be the Local Licensing Forums Development Day, scheduled for 17 June 2025. The session would be led by Danuta Dobrzanska and Pete Turner, focusing on the exploration of relevant alcohol harm data, which would be derived from discussions with the City Council Data Insights Team.

The Forum resolved:-

to note the date of the next meeting.

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- **ELAINE MOTTRAM, Chairperson**