

## LICENSING BOARD INFORMATION SHEET

### FEEDBACK ON LICENSING POLICY STATEMENT

I would say that in general I feel that the policy works very well. The simplicity and accessibility of the document itself is very much appreciated. It really does assist us in advising clients to have a such a clear document to refer to.

As to changes, the points I would raise are I expect already well on your radar. They relate mainly to outside areas and the standard conditions dealing with music. There definitely seems to be a demand from clients to have some form of entertainment outside and outside spaces are being more and more important. I am also getting a lot of questions about extending the terminal hours outwith the city centre. We have been advising clients up until now against lodging major variations to extend past policy hours but I am asked almost weekly about whether it is a possibility particularly from premises who are on the 'cusp'.

Obviously, I may come back at a later date once the formal Consultation on the Policy occurs, but my initial thoughts are really that there isn't terribly much to say about the current Policy as it stands. The only point that I would perhaps flag up is that the Board might want to look at the disparity between the hours in the area designated as City Centre when contrasted with the area outwith the City Centre. Whether it's a question of looking at re-drafting the boundaries or whether it's a question of perhaps reducing the difference between the 2 areas I'm not too sure.

I absolutely accept of course that each application is dealt with on its own merits, but as we both have been round the block a few times, I think it's fair to say that where a Board has a Policy it really takes something pretty special to have them deviate from that Policy.

There are certain premises (and I have a particular premises for which we act in mind to be transparent!) where for the type of business they do, it would be of enormous benefit to them, and with really little if any detriment to the locality, if they were granted hours slightly longer than that which the Policy would allow.

Particularly on the rebound from Covid and all the difficulties which that has caused the trade, perhaps a slight "loosening" of the restraint on the trading hours outwith the City Centre might be worth looking at.

That is the only matter which I would raise at the present time. Certainly, I would very much endorse the Board's current approach, whereby, people are only cited to attend Hearings if it is necessary for them to do so. Where there are no Objections and no adverse comments etc. etc., as per the Board's current approach, it makes far more sense to simply have these dealt with in the absence of a Representative or Applicant to avoid the amount of time and money that frankly is wasted in having legal representation having to appear in front of the Board to say little more than "move grant".

These are my initial thoughts and as I say I might come up with something else when the formal Consultation process begins.

I'd like to raise the issue of the outdoor drinking policy. As it stands, it is very inflexible in terms of both the restrictive hours (closure at 10pm) and lack of music.

This is at odds with the small number of venues that have been able to remain open outdoors later, as a result of grandfather rights, as well as with venues that can provide music outdoors under occasional licence, but not under premises licences.

If we want to encourage an outdoor café culture, the Board will need to support venues looking to open outdoor areas, in a commercially viable manner.

Taking the Draft Project as an example – this was a viable (outdoor) business when other venues were unable to open indoors. However as soon as competition reopened, a venue that was unable to play any music, and which required everyone to leave the premises at 10pm, was unable to compete.

This is not just a case of taking away the outdoor tables at 10pm, The whole business had to close, and so customers left. More importantly, they wouldn't come in the first place, knowing they would have to leave at 10pm.