

## THE FIFE COUNCIL - FIFE LICENSING FORUM – REMOTE MEETING

3 June, 2021

2.10 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Jeff Ellis (Convener), Neil Ewing, Fiona Rattray, Rebecca Shovlin and Paul Smith.

**ATTENDING:** June Barrie, Manager - Legal Services and Elizabeth Mair, Committee Officer, Legal & Democratic Services.

**ALSO ATTENDING:** Ian Davidson, NHS Fife

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Jim Bett, David Henderson, Douglas Hardaker, Paul Madill and Susan Normansell.

### 1. WELCOME

Jeff Ellis, Convener, welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted that there was not a quorum of members present and that any decisions made would be ratified at the next meeting.

### 2. MINUTE

The Forum considered the minute of meeting of Fife Licensing Forum of 25 February 2021.

#### Decision

The Forum agreed to approve the minute.

### 3. UPDATES FROM FIFE LICENSING BOARD

The Forum considered a report detailing the business of the Fife Licensing Board - "List of Decisions" from the Board meeting of 7th December 2020, which was sub-divided into: New Grant(s); Provisional(s); Variation (Major)(s); Personal Licence(s), Premises Licence Review(s) and Personal Licence Review(s).

June Barrie advised that the Licensing Board had met in person within social distancing guidance on 19th April to deal with a small number of applications and other business dealt with by written submissions. She also confirmed that occasional licence applications had been decided by the Board members using email in the past year and that there had been no additional delegated powers.

#### Decision

The Forum noted:-

- (1) the decisions of the Board Meeting on 7th December 2020; and
- (2) the information regarding Licensing applications.

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### 4. IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

The continuing impact of Coronavirus restrictions was discussed. Jeff Ellis advised that the letter agreed at the previous meeting had been sent to the leaders of the four main political parties at Holyrood but apart from a holding reply from Willie Rennie of the Liberal Democrats, there had been no response so far.

It was reported that, as premises were opening up again as restrictions eased, one of the main issues was staff shortages. Many staff had found other jobs or moved away during the pandemic so were no longer available and others were now taking leave after their return from furlough. The shortage of staff was also leading to wage increases of up to 30%.as demand outweighed supply.

Another issue was that licensees now had to start paying back loans and other costs while still operating at much lower profit margins due to lower customer numbers. There had been reports that anything between 25% to 75% of premises would close due to the pandemic for various reasons including an increase in home drinking which might not be reversed when the situation went back to normal. It was suggested that this could be an issue also for the NHS as home poured measures were usually much larger than regulated ones and which could lead to health problems.

Finally, Neil Ewing advised that there had been an increase in domestic abuse reports to the Police over the past year but a decrease in anti-social behaviour. Shoplifting was increasing, possibly due to more people having money problems due to the pandemic. The Police had to make sure that people were kept safe and had been out talking to operators of licensed premises to support them with the majority following the governments guidelines.

### **Decision**

The Forum:-

- (1) noted the current position relating to the COVID-19 pandemic in respect of licensed premises; and
- (2) agreed to await any responses to the letter to the Scottish Government party leaders for discussion at the next meeting.

### **5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Forum noted that the next meeting would be held on 12th August 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

### **6. ALCOHOL FOCUS SCOTLAND - EFOCUS NEWSLETTERS**

The Forum noted that eFocus newsletters could be accessed directly through the Alcohol Focus Scotland website and a link was provided.

### **7. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

#### **(1) Asymptomatic Testing**

There was discussion on the use of asymptomatic testing for staff and whether they were being requested/encouraged to have this done. Paul Smith advised that, following an outbreak amongst staff at one of his premises, premises, he was now drawing up new working policies and asking all staff to take tests before their shifts. It was also reported that the size of the

premises would be a factor as small independent premises were less likely to require staff to provide negative test results before attending work.

**(2) Appointment of New Member**

Ian Davidson, Lead Nurse, NHS Fife Addiction Services, was in attendance and had expressed a desire to join the Forum. Members present indicated that they were happy to accept Ian as a member but, as there was no quorum, it was agreed that this should be ratified at the next meeting.

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