

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

25 November, 2021

2.00 p.m. – 3.05 p.m.

**PRESENT:** John Barclay (Convener), Izzy Corbin, Neil Ewing and Fiona Rattray.

**ATTENDING:** June Barrie, Manager, Legal Services, Elizabeth Mair, Committee Officer, Legal & Democratic Services and Councillor Carol Lindsay, Convener, Fife Licensing Board.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Jim Bett, Ian Davidson, Jeff Ellis, Douglas Hardaker, Paul Madill and Susan Normansell.

### 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

In the absence of the Convener, John Barclay took the Chair and welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted that there was not a quorum of members present and that any decisions would require to be ratified at the next meeting.

### 2. MINUTE

The Forum considered the minute of the meeting of 12 August 2021.

#### Decision

The Forum agreed to approve the minute.

### 3. FIFE LICENSING BOARD ANNUAL FUNCTIONS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Forum considered the Fife Licensing Board Annual Functions and Financial Statement. June Barrie highlighted points in the papers and advised that the recently appointed Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Lindsay Thomson, would be the new Clerk to the Licensing Board.

#### Decision

The Forum noted the information provided in the reports.

### 4. UPDATES FROM FIFE LICENSING BOARD

The Forum considered reports detailing the business of the Fife Licensing Board - "List of Decisions" from the Board meetings of 21st June and 25th October 2021, which were sub-divided into: New Grant(s); Provisional(s); Variation (Major)(s); Personal Licence Review(s); Occasional(s); and Premises Licence Review(s).

Neil Ewing advised that the Police were engaging with premises to provide advice and support for the implementation and enforcement of Covid restrictions, including Covid vaccination passports. There had been reports from nightclub owners that some persons were complaining about having to show the proof of vaccination when they hadn't had to provide this at other premises. However, not all types of hospitality premises were included in this requirement and Neil advised that some local nightclub owners had sent representations to the Scottish Government as they felt they were being singled out.

Izzy Corbin advised that, due to the recent surge of infections in St Andrews, linked to University students, some older people were now afraid to go out to local shops or other premises. There had been a number of recent events held and students were out in local premises in large numbers. Neil Ewing advised that the Police were aware of some recent incidents and also that there were two officers dedicated to the University. It had been noted that there was a significant reduction in mask wearing and social distancing. Following a question regarding vaccination rates for students he advised that he would ask the University if they had any information on this.

### **Decision**

The Forum noted the information contained in the reports.

## **5. UPDATE ON IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

Neil Ewing reported that, during the earlier period of the pandemic, crime figures had reduced, including shoplifting and night time crime. However, over the past few months, although attendance was still lower than normal, crime figures had returned to the numbers seen before the pandemic and calls to Police had returned to their previous level.

Councillor Carol Lindsay advised that, although the Licensing Board was continuing to meet and issuing licenses, there was still the potential for premises to close due to lower income and higher costs. John Barclay reported that there was still a lack of confidence in the community to attend licensed premises as much as before the pandemic. Neil Ewing advised that, although older people were not going out to the same extent, younger people were making up for lost time and this was resulting in a lot of issues. Fiona Rattray reported that there was a large backlog of cases for the courts to process and of course new cases continued to come in. She had noticed a vast reduction in mask wearing and social distancing on a recent holiday in England and was also of the opinion that older people had become used to drinking at home and would probably continue to do so.

John Barclay advised that, following a recent celebration in Newcastle, members of a local football team had taken three tests after social contacts to make sure they had not been infected and he felt that education in testing was the key. Fiona Rattray advised that there were very useful YouTube videos which demonstrated how to take lateral flow tests.

### **Decision**

The Forum noted the updates and information provided.

## **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. DATES FOR 2022**

The Forum considered a draft timetable detailing dates of meetings for 2022.

### **Decision/**

**Decision**

The Forum:-

- (1) agreed the meeting dates for 2022 as detailed in the timetable; and
- (2) noted that the next meeting would be the AGM and that agenda items would include appointment of a Convener and reappointments of members as appropriate.

**8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

- (1) Licensing Standards Officers  
June Barrie and Neil Ewing advised that it had been agreed that an additional Licensing Standards Officer be recruited in addition to the existing two posts. This had not yet been advertised but work was ongoing.
  - (2) Traffic Light (RAG) Police Report  
In response to a question from John Barclay on the availability of the 'traffic light' reports which had formerly been submitted to the Forum, Neil Ewing advised that these reports were still prepared and he would provide one for the next meeting. It was agreed that this should be a summary of the full report and would not specify names of individuals.
  - (3) Spiking/Injections  
Izzy Corbin expressed concern regarding recent reports of persons being injected with drugs in nightclubs and licensed premises. It was noted that anyone noticing anything suspicious should report this to the police or premises manager. Izzy suggested that an approach similar to 'Ask for Angela' might be useful and Neil Ewing advised that those who had received Bystander campaign training should be able to assist. He also advised that there had been no reports of spiking by injection in Fife so far and most cases were still through drinks being spiked. Premises staff had been advised to call an ambulance and the police if they suspected a spiking incident. He did not think that metal detectors would be an option for premises as a preventative measure but bag searches could be carried out. Where incidents did occur it was important to get any evidence as soon as possible.
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