

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LICENSING COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER
2024, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Connolly (Chair)
Councillors S Bull, T Deffley, J Dunlop,
S Marlow, C Redfern, V Smith and
R Townsend

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors S Hopewell

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
Paul Thomas-Jones	- Service Manager – Environmental Health

186 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

187 MINUTES - 10 JULY 2024

It was moved by Councillor Townsend and seconded by Councillor Deffley, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 10 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 10 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

188 MINUTES - LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE - 11 JULY 2024

It was moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Bull, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 11 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee meeting held on 11 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

189 MINUTES - LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE - 17 JULY 2024

It was moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Townsend, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 17 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee meeting held on 17 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

190 MINUTES - LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE - 22 JULY 2024

It was moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Redfern, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 22 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee meeting held on 22 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

191 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting she said that she did not have any news or updates to share with the Committee.

192 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

193 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REGULATED AND LICENCED ACTIVITIES PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Executive Member for Wellbeing introduced the report, explaining that the function of the Environmental Team came under her portfolio. She said that the report had been brought to the Committee following requests from Members for further information about the Environmental Health Department.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing said that the report included content on both the issues relating to the registration and regulatory oversight of food premises, and, although not within the remit of the Licensing Committee, the report also included information pertaining to the other activities licenced by the Environmental Health Team.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing said that despite the demands on the Environmental Team they had received external recognition, being awarded the RSPCA gold level PawPrints Award for their commitment to animal welfare and having their Air Quality Action Plan published on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) website as an example of good practice.

The Environmental Health Service Manager drew Members attention to key areas of the report. He said that pages 35 – 38 gave an overview of the functions of the three teams within the department and included a table

which gave a summary of the licences issued by Environmental Health.

The Environmental Health Service Manager said that it had been noted that content regarding private water supplies was missing from the report. He said that there were currently 1600 food premises within the district, and that this number fluctuated due to openings and closures.

The Environmental Health Service Manager said that the vacancy within the department for a Senior Technical Officer - Commercial had now been recruited to, with the successful candidate due to take up the post in November 2024. He said that due to staffing issues the department had focused on areas of high risk, which had caused the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to implement the Stage 1 improvement process. He said that as a consequence of an action plan being approved (as seen at Appendix A of the report) this action had been de-escalated as of April 2024.

The Chair thanked the Environmental Health Service Manager for his report.

Councillor Townsend asked for clarification of Power BI training, which could be seen in the action plan.

The Environmental Health Service Manager said that Power BI was a reporting tool, which linked to the department's data base and enabled information to be extracted.

Councillor Dunlop asked if the department were able to hold the Environment Agency (EA) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to account.

The Environmental Health Service Manager said that they could informally approach and discuss matters with the EA and HSE, and that issues could be raised on a political level. He said that he would investigate if any other avenues were available.

The Chair asked for clarification of the three Executive Members who held portfolios within the department.

The Environmental Health Service Manager said that this was Councillor Hoskin for air pollution, Councillor Goldspink for housing and Councillor Hopewell for all other areas.

The Chair said that the report was useful and informative, and asked how frequently future reports would be brought before the Committee.

The Environmental Health Service Manager said that Environmental Health did not generally attend the Licencing Committee, and so there was no precedence. He said that he was therefore happy to leave the frequency of reports at the Chair's discretion, adding that it may be beneficial for reports to be delivered in tandem with the progress of the action plan.

Councillor Townsend referred to page 45 of the report and asked why there were camp sites in the district, but none were licenced.

The Environmental Health Service Manager said that there were exemptions within the legislation, which included clubs having their own regimes, and sites not requiring a licence should they operate below a certain number of days.

Councillor Marlow asked why there were staff shortages within Environmental Health departments nationally.

The Environmental Health Service Manager said that the Local Government Association (LGA) was investigating this, and that avenues were being explored to expand qualifications, i.e., via apprenticeships as an alternative to university courses. He said that promotion for the vocation had previously been undertaken in schools, and that this needed to be restarted.

Councillor Marlow asked if options had been explored in relation to reducing agency staffing costs.

The Environmental Health Service Manager said that both a shared service and using a company to carry out inspections had been considered. He said that these options had proved expensive, with it cheaper for the department to continue to carry out all duties themselves.

It was moved by Councillor Deffley and seconded by Councillor Townsend that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the performance of Environmental Health with regards to regulated and licenced activities pertaining to food premises be considered and scrutinised and any comments passed onto the Executive Member for Wellbeing for consideration; and

B) that the performance of other activities regulated and licenced by Environmental Health be considered and any comments be passed onto the Executive Member for Wellbeing for consideration.

194 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Chairman
Date

