

MINUTES of a meeting of the LICENSING COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2016

Present: Councillor N Smith (Chairman)

Councillors G A Allman, N Clarke, J Cotterill, D Everitt, T Eynon, D Harrison, G Houtt, K Merrie MBE, P Purver, V Richichi, A C Saffell, S Sheahan and M Specht

In Attendance: Councillors R Johnson and J Legrys

Officers: Mr D Gill, Mr L Mansfield, Mrs C Ridgway and Mrs R Wallace

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors J G Coxon, G Jones and M B Wyatt.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2015.

The Chairman expressed his disappointment that there were no Members in attendance at the evening event in Ashby to monitor the night time economy with officers as referred to within the minutes. He believed that Members would learn a lot at these events and encouraged them to do their utmost to attend the one later in the year. Details would be circulated once it had been arranged.

In relation to the training on the IDOX public access software that Members received after the last meeting, Councillor T Eynon stated that she was happy with the training but unfortunately she still struggled to use the system. She thanked officers for agreeing to keep attaching the details of licences as part of the weekly Members Bulletin.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

8. PURPLE FLAG ACCREDITATION - ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH

The Environmental Health Team Manager presented the report to Members and introduced Catherine Ridgeway (Community Focus Officer) to the Committee who would be leading the application process.

Regarding the recommendation to elect a Member to represent the Licensing Committee at the Working Group, the Chairman asked Members to not put forward an Ashby Ward Member. Councillor J Cotterill proposed Councillor M Specht and it was seconded by Councillor D Harrison. It was put to the vote and agreed.

Councillor A C Saffell reported that Castle Donington Parish Council had been researching options such as the purple flag accreditation for the town and although he was not the Member representative on this occasion, he would like to be involved as much as possible. Officers took the comment on board.

Chairman's initials

Councillor S Sheahan asked how the process would work, would it be taking an honest approach or would it be concentrating more on selling the good points of Ashby. He also asked who the assessors were and how they fit into the scheme. The Community Focus Officer explained that assessors were from all across the country and from a variety of backgrounds involved in the night time economy. She explained that Purple Flag undertake an unbiased honest assessment that looked at all aspects including the dispersal of people, state of streets, antisocial behaviour and methods of people leaving the area such as taxis and buses. She added that she was an assessor for Purple Flag and that it was not an easy accreditation to obtain and towns did fail.

The Chairman asked if there was any data or comments that Purple Flag had given to other towns available for public viewing and also how the accreditation was publicised. The Community Focus Officer responded that the assessment was undertaken using criteria within specific areas; this was then reported back to towns so that it was clear where the positives and negatives were. She explained that Purple flag had a website and published material.

Councillor T Eynon asked if there was any evidence that obtaining the accreditation would bring any benefits to the town. She also asked if there was any way to measure the outcomes as it was important to see the current position and be clear what improvements were required. The Community Focus Officer responded that she would be using crime statistics, CCTV, consulting with people who regularly visit Ashby and business owners. The Chairman also added that it would be worthwhile talking to hotels and bed and breakfast establishments in the area as they would also benefit from the accreditation. He agreed that it was important to have some baseline figures to measure against.

The Environmental Health Team Manager reported that a self assessment was being undertaken on 12 March which would help identify areas of improvement and provide a matrix for comparisons at the end of the process.

Councillor K Merrie commented that the initiative was a good idea and hoped Ashby would be successful. He asked if there were any plans to roll it out to other areas in the District, such as Coalville. The Community Focus Officer responded that it was the intention to look at other areas in the future if Ashby was successful as there were no restrictions on the size of the town; the requirements just needed to be met.

In response to a question from Councillor K Merrie, the Community Focus Officer explained that the cost of the application would be funded by the Council, the Partnership and Leicestershire County Council would be looking at the funding available for a proportion. In response to a further question from Councillor K Merrie, the Community Focus Officer stated that there was no intention of asking the Town Council to contribute to the ongoing costs at the moment but it was something that could be considered in the future.

Councillor K Merrie asked if December would be the most appropriate time to undertake an assessment due to the Christmas festivities. The Community Focus Officer explained that the assessors understood that the time of year affected the town and they would be interested in how the behaviour was dealt with more than the actual behaviour itself.

In response to a question from Councillor D Harrison, the Chairman stated that once the accreditation was achieved it would be reviewed on an annual basis. Councillor D Harrison commented that he welcomed the proposal and was keen for other towns such as Castle Donington to also consider applying. He was however, put off by the fact that it was being funded by the District Council and not the Town Council. He believed that if the initiative turned out to be a good marketing tool which benefited the town then the Town Council should be contributing to the costs.

Chairman's initials

Councillor G A Allman asked how it had been demonstrated that there was a need for this accreditation. The Community Focus Officer explained that in her role as the night time economy officer she could see the opportunities that were available for Ashby. She added that Ashby was already doing a lot of the things that bigger towns did and she felt that it would pass the assessment. She also felt that it was important to celebrate the success of the town. The Environmental Health Team Manager commented that there was not necessarily a need for the accreditation but he felt that the Council should celebrate the successes and improvements in the town in the last five years and this was a good way to do that.

Councillor T Eynon commented that unless evidence that the accreditation was a benefit to the town she felt it would not be worthwhile. She added that it needed to be Council evidence as the Purple Flag evidence would be biased. However she did feel that if it was successful it would be worth considering for Castle Donington. The Chairman reminded Members that if it was deemed as not being beneficial once obtained, it did not have to be continued.

Councillor M Specht compared the accreditation to the Blue Flag on beaches and commented that it did make a difference on people's decisions to visit. He agreed with other comments made regarding Castle Donington's potential for applying for the accreditation as it was also a great town. He believed that Ashby was nearly ready for the assessment and would be proud to represent the Committee on the working group. He also asked to be included in the self assessment in March.

Discussion was had on the way the taxi's operated within the town and that there were issues that needed to be considered as part of the self assessment.

In response to a question on publicity from Councillor P Purver, the Community Focus Officer explained that if the town was successful there would be a publicity launch with local businesses to promote as well as the Tourist Information Centre, bar staff and door security staff at public houses. She stressed that Birmingham recently lost the accreditation due to a lack of publicity so it was important to get it right. In response to a further question from Councillor P Purver, the Community Focus Officer explained that businesses would be encouraged to apply for grants to fund publicising the accreditation and pub watch and social media would also be used.

Councillor A C Saffell commented that the reason behind his request to be involved with the process was to learn about how Castle Donington could be improved and as antisocial behaviour had been reported in neighbouring villages, how to deal with it if it came into the area. The Environmental Health Team Manager reported that there were also measures that could be taken as part of premises licences if needed. The Chairman suggested that as a Ward Member, Councillor A C Saffell could organise a meeting that could be attended by the publicans in the area and council officers to look at matters such as these. The Community Focus Officer also commented that she would be happy to discuss 'Pubwatch' or 'Retail Radio' for the town with Councillor A C Saffell after the meeting.

Councillor G A Allman reported that on average 25 public houses closed per week throughout the Country. He felt that officers already did a fantastic job and that this accreditation was not needed.

The Chairman asked officers to keep the Committee updated on the progress at future meetings.

RESOLVED THAT:

Chairman's initials

An application for Purple Flag Accreditation within Ashby de La Zouch be actively supported by electing Councillor Specht to represent the Licensing Committee at the Working Group.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.25 pm