

LICENSING COMMITTEE

3 SEPTEMBER 2020

LICENSED PREMISES AND THE REGULATION OF CORONAVIRUS CONTROLS

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members on the actions that have been taken to implement the coronavirus controls in licensed premise.

2.0 Background

2.1 On 20 March the Prime Minister announced that from midnight that night all bars, pubs, night clubs and cafes would close until further notice. This was subsequently made law in Regulations issued later that weekend. The regulations did allow for premises to open to provide a takeaway service for both drinks and food, although external chairs and tables provided by the premises could not be used for the eating or drinking of food purchased from those premises. In effect this meant that beer gardens and outside areas were also closed.

2.2 The Licensing Team received a number of calls relating to premises that were alleged to be flouting the rules, particularly in the first weeks of the lockdown. Numerous visits were made in response to these but in most instance there was a reasonable explanation as to the presence of people at the premises.

2.3 A small number of premises provided a takeaway service that did lead to local issues but in the main these were addressed and local controls put in place.

2.4 The Prime Minister's road plan for easing coronavirus controls allowed licensed premises to reopen from 8.00am on Saturday, 4 July. Some questions were raised as to why it was felt appropriate to lift the restrictions on a Saturday when both local government and police resources are stretched but the decision was final.

2.5 All premises that opened on 4 July were required to comply with the Government's Covid 19 secure standard guidance. These are guidance documents that have been written to set the standard for different work settings.

2.6 The guidance relevant here is the Covid 19 secure guidance for restaurants, pubs and takeaway services and it set out a series of criteria that the premises is advised to put in place. It should be noted that this is guidance not law. The broad requirements are:

- A Covid 19 Risk Assessment
- Managing food and drink service
- Ventilation
- Customer toilets
- Social distancing
- Track and Trace

3.0 Visits and Actions

- 3.1 In response to the easing of lock down restrictions a day of activity was undertaken both before and on Saturday, 4 July. This involved three distinct activities.
- 3.2 In order to ensure that as many premises as possible were aware of the requirements of the guidance relating to the covid secure standard the Schemelink APP that is used by Newark Pubwatch was used to promote the guidance. This was well received by the Pubwatch members.
- 3.3 Following this initiative a number of establishments requested a pre-opening check visit from licensing staff so that they could be reassured that they had understood the guidance and that they were ready to open.
- 3.4 During the day of 4 July 'Covid 19 Ambassadors were present on the main high streets across the district providing advice and guidance to both the public and newly opened premises. This was followed in the evening with visits to licensed premises. The police worked with Environmental Health and Licensing staff to visit 15 licensed premises in Newark and 7 in other areas of the district to check the arrangements that were in place. Most premises had read and understood the guidance and this was reflected in the management of the premises.
- 3.2 This evening exercise was repeated on Saturday, 8 August. In the daytime visits were made to retail and non-licensed premises and in the evening premises in the night time economy were targeted. On this occasion the check was extended to restaurants as well as pubs. In total 27 premises were inspected. It was noted that in some premises the standards had been relaxed and action was taken to remedy this.
- 3.3 What has become apparent in all the checks is that the response to the requirement to carry out track and trace data collection is mixed and this is the area where additional guidance has had to be provided.
- 3.4 In response to the increase in Covid 19 cases in Newark a further day of activity was undertaken on Saturday, 15 August. Support for this activity was provided from other authorities within Nottinghamshire who provided staff to assist Environmental Health colleagues. Premises where people congregate were identified and visits were made to cafes, restaurants, coffee shops, and licensed premises. The areas of focus were Newark, Balderton, Southwell and the smaller villages around Newark including Farndon, Muskham and Coddington. Around 80 premises were visited.
- 3.5 The feedback from both officers carrying out the visits and the owners of the premises has been very positive. Officers are reporting a high level of compliance. Track and trace details are still the one area where improvement is required.
- 3.6 Further organised interventions are planned and consideration is already being given to what may be required over the next few months as outside areas become less usable due to the weather and Christmas party season begins to develop.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note the actions taken so far in relation to licensed premises and Covid 19 actions.

Background Papers - Nil

For further information please contact Alan Batty on Extension 5467.

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