

LICENSING COMMITTEE: 30 May 2008

Report of the Chief Strategic Planning and Environment Officer

LICENSED PREMISES AWARD SCHEME

1. Background

- 1.1 A number of awards schemes such as 'Best Bar None', have been adopted as a means of encouraging licensed premises to meet the highest standards, however such schemes suffer from a number of significant disadvantages for licensing authorities.
- 1.2 In partnership with South Wales Police the licensing authority has sought to identify an awards scheme which may be suitable for Cardiff. This report is to provide details of the scheme and request the support of the Committee for its adoption.

2. Details.

- 2.1 The 'Best Bar None Award' is granted to alcohol-vending organisations with long standing commitment to social responsibility and the safety of people using their premises. It was devised and written by Greater Manchester Police as an initiative focusing on managing the night time economy to cut down on alcohol related crime and irresponsible drinking. The award was initiated in 2003 and a number of authorities throughout the country have adopted the scheme. Premises gaining the award display a plaque outside to show the public that they have reached the standard and care about social responsibility, and their customer's welfare. Thus giving the customer more informed choice when choosing where to consume alcohol, and supporting premises who seek to trade at a higher standard and offering a commercial advantage to encourage participation in the scheme. There are a number of similar trade awards schemes such as the British Beer and Pub Association Beautiful Beer Award and the Morning Advertiser Great British Pub Awards.
- 2.2 While the scheme has been successful in raising the need for higher standards in licensed premises there are a number of problems with adopting awards schemes such as Best Bar None which include:
- It is expensive to administer, licensing authorities have had to employ dedicated staff to arrange marketing, carry out inspections and administer the scheme.
 - As a voluntary scheme it may be invalidated because of the lack of premises taking part in the process.
 - The scheme imposes an economic burden on the premises taking part, not only requiring an application fee but in preparing for additional inspections.

- The scheme inevitably results in enforcement activity being targeted at premises which volunteer to take part which will usually not be those which provide the most risk to the licensing objectives and as such does not comply with the Hampton principles which require enforcement resources to be targeted at areas of highest risk.
 - As there are many elements, other than the licensing objectives, in the classification of a Best Bar a licensing authority's decision may not relate to the customer experience.
 - Because of the expense of running such schemes there are concerns that they tend to be unsustainable over the long term.
- 2.3 South Wales Police Licensing Section operate a 'Traffic Light System' to obtain early warning of premises within the city centre which may pose a risk to the licensing objectives. In discussion with the licensing authority the police have identified how that the system could be extended to provide an indication of those premises which have operated most effectively during the year. It is therefore proposed to introduce in partnership with South Wales Police, The licensed trade association and the Fire Service an Awards scheme for licensed premises.

3. Licensed Premises Award Scheme.

- 3.1 The Police Licensing 'Traffic Light System' scheme is based on information from the police crime incident database and the Heath Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit data. It is used to keep track of incidents in licensed premises in the city centre. The information is analysed and used to identify at a very early stage those pubs and clubs in the city centre which are having difficulty meeting the licensing objectives to enable the police to work with the operator to resolve the problems. It has been very successful in ensuring high standards of safety and in minimising the crime, disorder and harm associated with the consumption of alcohol in Cardiff city centre since the implementation of the Licensing Act.
- 3.2 In partnership with the City Council and the Cardiff Licensees Forum, South Wales Police intend to adopt a new traffic light system for crimes involving dishonesty for example and this will give a more complete picture of the safety and security standards within individual licensed premises. The system could also utilise information on licensed premises provided by the Licensing Authority, Waste Management, Pollution Control, Health and Safety, Development control, Weights and Measures and the Child Protection Unit of the Council. The existing system is points based with incidents attracting points based on the seriousness of the problems and this approach would lend itself to ranking premises. At present the main aim of the system is to identify problematic premises but with the additional input this will enable the other end of the scale to be monitored and to identify those premises which are well managed.
- 3.3 It is intended that following 12 months gathering of data the premises which most meet the requirements will be identified and awards given to the best on licensed premises in the city centre. A panel of the partnership comprising a Senior Police Officer, Chair of the Licensing Committee and Chair of the Cardiff Licensees Forum would be responsible for making the awards. The awards could possibly consist of a cup to be passed on each year supported by wall plaques and

commemorative certificates which would be a permanent record for premises. Three awards, bronze, silver and gold could be made annually in respect of three categories of premises Large, Medium and Small.

- 3.4 The benefit of this approach is that it will be relatively inexpensive as it is based on the assessment of core data which is already kept, will make use of existing operating practices and does not require premises to volunteer or make an application. The assessment of the best venues will also be made from annual monitoring of a broad range of data rather than from a single inspection of the premises and is therefore likely to be a more accurate reflection of the operation of the premises.

4. Achievability

This report contains no equality personnel or property implications.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this Report

6. Financial Implications.

- 6.1 The licensing service is required to be self financing with all expenditure being met from fees and charges which are set nationally.
- 6.2 The system can be provided from existing resources however there will be an additional moderate outlay on providing the awards which will be contained within the existing budget.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 That the Committee support the principle of the establishment an annual awards scheme for licensed premises.
- 7.2 That a further report be made to the Committee when the details of the award scheme have been finalised.

SEAN HANNABY

1 May 2008

CHIEF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

This report has been prepared in accordance with procedures approved by Corporate Managers.

Background Papers: None