

The Highland Licensing Forum

Meeting Of the Highland Licensing Forum, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Tuesday 5th June 2018

Licensing Standards Officers' report.

Summary:

To provide an update to the Highland Licensing Forum members in relation to the activities of the Licensing Standard Officers and any other matters of interest.

Licensed Premises Checks

Technical issues regarding display of notices continue to crop up but the majority of premises are compliant. Fewer routine visits are carried out and our activities are much more targeted at premises which are new, have undergone licence variations or where it is suspected that there may be failings.

Festive Period Extended hours.

As in previous years there has been a number of applications for extended hours by on-sales premises licence holders. Many premises also now have a seasonal variation to take advantage of any period of extended hours agreed by the Board over the festive period with the only requirement being that they notify the Board and the police of the dates extended hours will be operated. It appears that the festive period 2017/18 passed without noteworthy incidents

Licence-related fee increases – Other Council Departments.

Any applicant for a premises licence is obliged to submit "section50" certificates from Planning, Building Standards and Environmental Health. The fee for the certificates from Building Standards and planning has recently increased from £43 to £47. The application fee for the food hygiene certificate has increased from £90 to £99. I understand that the increases arise from the Council's decision to increase application fees by 10% other than where set by statute.

Premises Licence Annual Fees

There was, as usual, a significant number of premises which did not pay the annual fee by the due date. That cause significant extra work by admin staff and LSOs and ultimately only a very small number had their licences revoked. In the majority of those cases the premises had ceased to trade however at least one premises continues to trade and is currently in the process of reapplying for a premises licence.

Personal Licences

There is no firm information about plans for renewal of personal licences in 2019 however it is likely that some form of evidence to prove identity and right to work in the UK will be required. It is hoped that information will be available for discussion at the next meeting of the Forum.

Minimum Unit Pricing etc.

Many of the large supermarket chains recently undertook the stocking of a new range of products for the summer. Due to failures within their national pricing departments to adjust prices in-line with the requirements for general pricing of alcohol and promotions in Scotland we identified several incidents of multipacks being sold below the correct price. Those incidents coincidentally occurred during the transition to MUP and were quickly remedied. MUP appears to have commenced successfully and we are not aware of any serious problems with only a few instances of incorrect pricing having been identified. In some of those cases the problem arose with pre-printed pricing of multi-packs with managers not appreciating that the price would have to be increased.

Disabled Access Facilities Statement

Since May 2018 all new applications for a premises licence require to be accompanied by a Disabled Access Facilities Statement. Although there is some guidance on completion of the statement there are no requirements for specific details to be included. In some cases the applicant has merely recorded that there are no disabled facilities and the Board is not permitted to consider the content of the statement. The SG had made mention that members of the public would be able to access the statement in order to be able to make an informed choice about visiting particular premises however there is, as yet, no set way of the public accessing the information. It is hoped that more information will be available at the next meeting of the Forum.

Board Business

There continues to be a lot of new business for the Board to consider with numerous new premises licences and variations to existing licences being sought. Of note are the number of clubs which are applying to cease to be members clubs in terms of the act so as to be able to provide alcohol to non-members at functions and events other than in accordance with occasional licences. New distilleries and breweries have or are due to open and the Board has agreed to grant licences for on-sales commencing at 0900 hrs where on-consumption is linked, by condition, to formal tours and tastings if taking place before 1100 hrs. The Board also agreed to grant a bar/restaurant in Skye on-sales hours from 0800 hrs to tie in with ferry traffic subject to a condition that on-consumption of alcohol prior to 1100 would only be provided as an accompaniment to a meal. It was also noted that the maximum hours applied for exceeded the Board's policy of no more than 14 continuous hours in any one day.

