

Item 19(a)

-----Original Message-----

From: Sent: 26 May 2011 14:43

To: J A Loudon

Subject: Re: Licensing forum

We have a very switched on Committee Clerk who works with all three of our forums. The North Forum is progressing largely because the North Licensing Board is proactive, this has rubbed off on the Forum and the 2 bodies are keen to work together to progress matters.

The Forum does have a constitution and will allow AOCB items to be discussed at meetings. The Board Convenor is a member of the Forum but is not permitted to be an office bearer or hold appointed positions.

During transition, the Forum struggled and the Board worked with the Forum on providing statistical evidence on which to form the Board's overprovision policy. Since transition, the Forum have worked with Linda Bowie of Alcohol Focus Scotland, have drafted an action plan and are working on projects.

Because the Board works hard to avoid "contentious" issues arising at Board meetings, the Board and the Forum discussed areas affecting the community relating to alcohol.

To date the Forum and the Board have carried out joint inspections of our large marquee dances and have

- worked with the organisers, the Police and the LSO on progressing occasional licences and local conditions for occasional licences.
- worked with the Board in engaging with young people across Aberdeenshire on alcohol related issues
- worked with the Board in carrying out licensing roadshows in North Aberdeenshire to get community views on alcohol issues and views on the review of the Board's policy statement
- produced an extensive statistical document for the Board on the public health objective as part of the review of the Board's policy statement
- offered advice to the Board on family friendly premises. This has now led to a long-term joint project between the Board and the Forum looking at a potential accreditation scheme for licensed premises that have family friendly facilities. This work will also be done in conjunction with tourism

On their own, the Forum is looking at extending partnership working with the Aberdeenshire Community Safety Partnership beyond running the Best Bar None Scheme and is also exploring extended partnership working with the Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, both groups now being members of the Forum

The Forum has also designed their own website, leaflets and has an online discussion forum for members of the public to raise issues with them.

The Forum and the Board provide each other with copies of their agendas and minutes and Forum members regularly attend licensing board meetings.

Like all other Forums, our Forum struggles with membership. I think the key is that the Board and the Forum have both recognised that the Act isn't perfect, that while the Forum may not have anything to say about how the Board is conducting its business, there is a lot of work that can be achieved to allow the Board, the Forum and the trade to comply with the licensing objectives and I think most fundamentally, agree that partnership working is the only way to achieve the aims of the objectives. They may try approaches that some lawyers might argue is outwith the terms set down in the Act, but ultimately, because everyone is working together, it achieves compliance with the licensing objectives and therefore with the Act. Both the Board and the Forum will continue to do this until challenged and will then review procedures.

Open discussion is always encouraged. I am not by any means saying that the work of the Forum is perfect, but they are working hard progress the role of the Forums and will continue to do so.

Please note that the Central and South Aberdeenshire Forums are not quite as switched on as the North Forum but are keen to follow where the North Forum leads.

Hope this helps

Fiona

Fiona M. Stewart
Acting Team Leader
Senior Solicitor (Licensing)
Depute Clerk to the North Board
Legal and Governance
Corporate Services
Aberdeenshire Council
St. Leonards
Sandyhill Road
Banff
AB45 1BH
Legal Post LP6, Banff