

Regulatory Committee

10.00am, Monday, 6 February 2023

Response to Motion by Councillor Younie - Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs)

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the advice provided in this report;
 - 1.1.2 Agree to take no further action until the outcome to the Judicial Review is known; and
 - 1.1.3 Discharge the motion from the Council meeting on 27 October 2022 (Appendix 3).

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

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Report

Response to Motion by Councillor Younie - Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs)

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 On [27 October 2022](#) the Council approved an adjusted motion (Item 10.3) by Councillor Lewis Younie on Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs). This report sets out the information available on the issues raised within the motion, including the risk of Sexual Entertainment being driven underground in the event that the four existing SEVs premises close. The report acknowledges that members debated the merits of the 'nil cap' at their meeting on 31 March 2022.
- 2.2 The report also sets out clear advice about the necessary steps in the event that the Committee decides to review the numbers limitation or any other aspect of the policy.

3. Background

- 3.1 Section 76 of the [Air Weapons and Licesning \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) ('the 2015 Act') adds new sections (45A to 45C) to the [Civic \(Scotland\) Act 1982](#) ("the 1982 Act").
- 3.2 The Council resolved to license SEVs in terms of section 45B and Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act on 31 March 2022. Where a local authority resolves to license SEVs, the provisions at section 45A of the 1982 Act require a SEV licence for premises where the sexual entertainment is operated live, is for the direct or indirect financial benefit of the organiser and is for the sole or principal purpose of sexual stimulation of members of the audience. A previous [report](#) fully sets out the background to adoption of the statutory licensing scheme by the Council.
- 3.3 On [31 March 2022](#), Committee also agreed to cap the number of SEVs in its area to zero. Operators would still be able to apply for a licence, with the nil cap being a rebuttable presumption. At the time of making its decision, members of the Committee had before them strong views for and against the setting of the appropriate limit for SEVs at nil. In particular, the risk that setting the cap at nil would drive activity into unregulated spaces which are less safe was clearly articulated by a number of respondents to the consultation. Similar concerns were expressed by deputations. Committee also heard the contrary view that a nil cap should be adopted as the existence of SEVs contributes to wider gender based

violence. Committee weighed up these competing views and the other information it was provided when reaching its decision.

- 3.4 On 1 and 2 December 2022 a Judicial Review took place with respect to the decision to adopt a 'nil cap'. At the time of writing, a decision of the court is awaited.
- 3.5 On 27 October 2022, an adjusted motion by Councillor Younie was approved by Council. Details of the approved motion are attached in Appendix 3.

4. Main report

- 4.1 This report is in response to the motion which raised the concern that if the 'nil cap', as agreed by Committee, results in the closure of the four existing premises offering sexual entertainment then this would mean that performers would be forced to work in unregulated private spaces thereby placing performers at risk. As set out above, Committee had been made aware of this risk and the contrary view when reaching its original decision.
- 4.2 The Council's current position is that any venue currently operating will be required to apply for a SEV licence by 31 March 2023, and can continue to trade until the licence application is determined. Furthermore, a licence may be granted notwithstanding the 'nil cap' (as noted at 3.3 above). However, this is one of the issues that is being tested in the Judicial Review and therefore, at this stage, it is not clear what the situation will be at 1 April 2023.
- 4.3 The legislation specifically exempts any venue providing Sexual Entertainment on four or fewer occasions in any 12 months from the requirement to obtain a licence. Therefore, if sexual entertainment was provided as a one-off in a person's home or in holiday accommodation, this would not be regulated and neither the Council or Police would have statutory powers to enter these premises to regulate the activity.
- 4.4 In preparing this report, Regulatory Services undertook several actions. Firstly, officers approached Police Scotland for advice on any risks to public safety arising out of the assumption that the activity might be driven 'underground', and specifically whether they had any advice to offer in terms of actions which could mitigate any such risk. A response was received, and is included for members' consideration at Appendix 5.
- 4.5 Advice has also been sought from the Council's Chief Social Work Officer, whose teams have a role safeguarding and providing support to vulnerable adults. The response is attached at Appendix 6.
- 4.6 No complaints have been received about this particular issue by teams such as Family and Household Support, Licensing Standards or other Regulatory Services teams. This does not mean there is no risk but highlights that the most likely route for any specific concern to be raised is with the Police rather than the Council. Where any concerns emerge, it would be standard practice for the Council to liaise with officers from Police Scotland on how best to respond. Where required, multi-

agency structures could be utilised to deal with any concerning trend, including a Community Improvement Partnership, of which the Community Safety Partnership would have oversight.

- 4.7 The Council has given a commitment to explore what support can be given to individual performers. While this is being taken forward, the provision of such support is out with the remit of the Regulatory Committee.

Amending existing policy or revising the numbers limitation

- 4.8 During discussion of the motion at the Council meeting a range of views were expressed, including that the decision on the 'nil cap' should be revisited by the Regulatory Committee. Whilst the agreed motion did not expressly request this, it is acknowledged that it is a possibility and therefore it is essential that Committee is given advice on this. This point is not intended to suggest that Committee should or should not take this course, but it is important that if Committee decides to review any aspect of the policy, it does so within the framework of the legislation and guidance.
- 4.9 If Committee were minded to revisit any aspect of the SEV policy (including the 'nil cap') it must follow the steps set out in the relevant sections of the Act and the non-statutory guidance. It would therefore be necessary to engage in a further full consultation process with the groups listed in the existing policy as relevant stakeholders, i.e. the public, performers and any business directly concerned. Good practice would be to give consultees the opportunity to comment on any other aspect of the policy at the same time and, as set out in the Council's Consultation Policy, the consultation would last 12 weeks.
- 4.10 Whilst existing policy was arrived at after extensive consultation responses, using the previous consultation responses as a basis for amending the policy would not comply with the legislation or the guidance because a) they are more than 12 months old; and b) relevant stakeholders have not been given a fresh opportunity to respond to any change that may be made. Committee is advised that any decision to amend the policy without fresh consultation would risk further legal challenge.
- 4.11 Notwithstanding the merits or otherwise of further consultation and debate, it is considered prudent that any further steps and/or actions are delayed until a decision has been made on the ongoing Judicial Review, as that outcome could impact the advice given at this time.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 It is recommended that Committee notes this report and determines what, if any, further action it wishes to be progressed.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implication arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 It is recognised that concerns have been raised previously that SEV activity may be commercial sexual exploitation, encourages unhealthy attitudes towards women, and therefore damages society.
- 7.2 The Scottish Government stated during the passage of the 2015 Act that it acknowledges, through the introduction of this legislation, the freedom of adults to engage in legal activities and employment. Nevertheless, it continues to promote gender equality and actions that tackle outdated attitudes that denigrate or objectify groups or individuals, through all relevant means.
- 7.3 A methodical and robust approach to obtaining evidence and information on the subject was carried out in order to obtain relevant evidence from stakeholders and to minimise the risk of legal challenge to any policy or Committee decision. Evidence sessions were webcast in order to aid transparency and to provide a record of the evidence received.
- 7.4 All premises which could be affected by a SEV policy were written to and advised of the consultation. The Committee consulted with the trade and other interested parties throughout this process to ensure that all views are taken into account when forming a draft policy statement and licensing conditions framework.
- 7.5 Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls was first published in 2014 and was last updated in 2018. It sets out a definition of violence against women and girls, which includes 'commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography, and human trafficking'. Whilst recognising the conflict between this definition and the licensing of sexual entertainment venues, the Scottish Government intends that it will help to ensure that such activities take place in safe and regulated environments.
- 7.6 A full [Equalities Impact Assessment](#) was previously completed as part of the statutory consultation process and published.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 – Sexual Entertainment Venues – Proposed Resolution, Policy and Conditions – Update report to committee dated [31 March 2022](#).
- 8.2 [Webcast](#) of committee from 31 March 2022.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – SEV Resolution
- 9.2 Appendix 2 - SEV Licensing Policy
- 9.3 Appendix 3 – Motion to Council – 27 October 2022 (item 10.3)
- 9.4 Appendix 4 – Scottish Government guidance
- 9.5 Appendix 5 – Email from Police Scotland dated 27 December 2022
- 9.6 Appendix 6 – Advice from the Chief Social Worker

Appendix 1

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1982 (“the Act”)

CITY OF EDINBURGH SEXUAL ENTERTAINMENT VENUES RESOLUTION Number 1 of 2022

The City of Edinburgh Council, in exercise of its powers in terms of 45A-45C of the Act, hereby makes the following resolution:

- (1) Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act shall have effect throughout the Council’s area in relation to the licensing of Sexual Entertainment Venues.
- (2) Subject to the terms of the Act, a Sexual Entertainment Venue licence shall be required for the use of the premises as places of Sexual Entertainment as from **1 April 2023**
- (3) The premises in the Council’s area which require to be licensed under the Resolution include those which provide the following, as they are commonly known:

- (a) Lap dancing
- (b) Pole dancing
- (c) Table dancing
- (d) Strip shows
- (e) Peep shows
- (f) Live sex shows

The list of examples above is not intended to be exhaustive and should only be treated as indicative. The decision to licence premises as SEVs shall depend on the content of the relevant entertainment, rather than the name given to it.

In terms of the Act ‘Sexual entertainment’ means any live performance or any live display of nudity which is of such a nature that, ignoring financial gain, it must reasonably be assumed to be provided solely or principally for the purpose of sexually stimulating any member of the audience (whether by verbal or other means).

Appendix 2

Sexual Entertainment Venue Licensing Policy

Introduction

- 1.1 The City of Edinburgh Council (“the Council”) is able to regulate sexual entertainment venues through the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (the 1982 Act).
- 1.2 Section 76 of the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) added new sections 45A to 45C to the 1982 Act in order to introduce a discretionary licensing regime for sexual entertainment venues (SEVs). Section 76 also amends section 41 of the 1982 Act to specifically exclude sexual entertainment venues from the definition of places of public entertainment to ensure that a public entertainment licence cannot also be required for those venues.
- 1.3 The Council’s Regulatory Committee agreed on 31 March 2022 to make a resolution under section 45B(1) of the 1982 Act to introduce a licensing scheme for SEVs with effect from [Date to be added after committee decision]
Consequently, this SEV policy applies to the whole of Edinburgh.
- 1.4 The making of the resolution under section 45B(1) of the 1982 Act allows the Council to prescribe standard conditions and fees for the grant, variation, renewal and transfer of SEV licences and to determine the appropriate number of premises to be licensed as SEVs within the city or any identified locality of the city and the appropriate number may be set at zero.
- 1.5 The Council must prepare a statement of its policy with respect to the exercise of its functions in relation to the licensing of SEVs. The policy will have regard as to how it will affect the statutory licensing objectives of:
 - 1.5.1 Preventing public nuisance, crime and disorder
 - 1.5.2 Securing public safety
 - 1.5.3 Protecting children and young people from harm
 - 1.5.4 Reducing violence against women
- 1.6 The policy will also provide guidance for prospective applicants, existing licence holders, those who may wish to object to an application and members of the Licensing Sub-Committee when determining an application. This policy will be reviewed regularly and revised when necessary.

- 1.7 The key aims of civic licensing are the preservation of public safety and order and the prevention of crime. A specific SEVs licensing regime allows the Council to consider local circumstances in setting the number of venues able to operate within their areas and to exercise appropriate control and regulation of those venues.

Definitions

- 2.1 A SEV is defined in the 1982 Act as any premises at which sexual entertainment is provided before a live audience for (or with a view to) the financial gain of the organiser.
- 2.2 For the purposes of that definition, “sexual entertainment” means any live performance or any live display of nudity which is of such a nature that, ignoring financial gain, it must reasonably be assumed to be provided solely or principally for the purpose of sexually stimulating any member of the audience (whether by verbal or other means). An audience can consist of just one person.
- 2.3 This definition would apply to the following forms of entertainment as they are commonly known:
- 2.3.1 Lap dancing
 - 2.3.2 Pole dancing
 - 2.3.3 Table dancing
 - 2.3.4 Strip shows
 - 2.3.5 Peep shows
 - 2.3.6 Live sex shows
- 2.4 This list above is not intended to be exhaustive and should only be treated as indicative. The decision to licence premises as SEVs shall depend on the content of the relevant entertainment rather than the name given to it.
- 2.5 Premises at which sexual entertainment is provided on a particular occasion will not require to obtain a SEVs licence if the sexual entertainment has not been provided on more than 3 occasions within a 12-month period.

Locality

- 3.1 The Council considers that the character of the relevant locality, the use to which premises in the vicinity are put, and the layout, character or condition of the venue in respect of which the application is made, are relevant considerations when determining the grant of a SEV licence.

- 3.2 With reference to paragraph 9(7) of Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act, “relevant locality” means:
- a. In relation to the premises, the locality where they are situated;
 - b. In relation to a vehicle, vessel or stall, any locality where it is desired to use it as a SEV.

Character & Vicinity of Relevant Locality

- 3.3 In considering whether the grant, renewal or variation of the licence would be inappropriate given the vicinity in which the SEV premises operates, the Committee shall consider the existing character and function of the area. Having regard to Scottish Government guidance, due consideration will be given to the following:
- a. Whether the premises are situated in a residential area
 - b. Whether there are any schools and other places of education near the vicinity of the premises
 - c. Whether there are any places of worship in that vicinity
 - d. Whether there are other relevant businesses or charities operating in the area e.g. homelessness shelters, women’s refuges, supported accommodation, recovery units
 - e. Whether there are certain landmarks or facilities in the vicinity (e.g. historic buildings, sports facilities, cultural facilities, family leisure facilities, play areas or parks, youth facilities, retail shopping areas, and places used for celebration of commemoration
 - f. Whether there have been incidents involving anti-social behaviour, sexual assaults or more minor harassment reported in that area and/or in connection with the premises
 - g. Whether there have been incidents of human trafficking or exploitation in that area and/or in connection with the premises
- 3.4 The Council will consider relevant locality on a case by case basis, taking into account the particular circumstances of each application.

Appropriate Number of SEVs in a Relevant Locality

- 3.5 As set out within paragraph 9(5)(c) of Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act, the Council may refuse an application for a SEV if it is satisfied that the number of SEVs in the local authority area or relevant locality at the time the particular application is made is equal to or exceeds the number which the local authority consider is appropriate for the local authority area or locality. The Council is able to determine that the appropriate number for the local authority area or locality is nil.
- 3.6 The Council must determine the appropriate number of SEVs which it considers appropriate in any area within the Council's control. Having done so, each application will be considered on its own individual merits at the time the application is submitted to the Council.
- 3.7 The Council considers the appropriate maximum limit on the number of SEVs within the City of Edinburgh is [To be updated after Committee decision]. The Council considers that the city centre ward 11 (as shown Appendix 1) is the only area of the city where it is appropriate to have SEVs located. No separate localities have been identified. It is considered that no other Council wards are appropriate to have any SEVs operating within them given the predominantly residential nature and character of those wards.
- 3.8 Notwithstanding the terms of paragraph 3.7 above, the Council does not consider any commercial or industrial areas in the city appropriate locations for SEVs. At the time of passing the resolution there were no SEVs operating in these areas. Further it is possible that the classification of such areas can change through regeneration or development to become residential in character. Finally, these areas are not considered suitable as they can be isolated or quiet after normal business hours and these would not be appropriate locations having regard to the safety of performers.

Suitability of Premises

- 3.9 Under the 1982 Act the Council has the discretion to refuse applications relating to SEVs if it is considered that the grant or renewal of the licence would be unsuitable, having regard to the layout, character or condition of the premises, vehicle, vessel or stall in respect of which the application is made.
- 3.10 It is expected that when an application for a SEV licence is made, that the applicant will be able to demonstrate that the layout, character and/or condition of the premises is appropriate to the relevant entertainment proposed at the premises.

SEV Application Process

- 4.1 The 1982 Act allows the Council to issue a licence for a maximum period of one year. A licence can also be issued for a shorter period, if it is deemed appropriate.
- 4.2 An application for the grant, variation, renewal or transfer of a licence must be made in writing to the Council together with the appropriate fee, layout plan as well as complying with the following requirements:
 - a. Within seven days of the application being lodged with the Council, the applicant must publish an advertisement of the application in a local newspaper within Edinburgh. A suggested form of advertisement is available from the Licensing Service website. A copy of the newspaper in which the advertisement appears must be lodged with the Licensing Service within 3 days of the publication.
 - b. The applicant must display a notice of the application on or near the premises where it can be conveniently read by the public. The notice must be displayed for 21 days from the date the application is lodged with the Council. A copy of a display notice can be downloaded from the Licensing Service website. As soon as possible after the expiry of the period of 21 days, the applicant shall submit to the Council a certificate (available online) which states that a notice was duly exhibited for the required period.
 - c. Applicants will be required to provide pictures or sketches of the exterior design of the premises for consideration, in order to ensure that it complies with the standard conditions of licence.
 - d. Application packs must include a copy of the premises 'house rules' for performers and proposed code of conduct of patrons.
- 4.3 Applicants should note that the application fee is non-refundable in the event of the licence being refused or the application being withdrawn prior to determination. To view the Council's policy on refunds, click [here](#).
- 4.4 The following list organisations will receive a copy of an application upon its submission to the Council
 - a. Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre
 - b. Edinburgh Women's Aid
 - c. Equally Safe (Edinburgh) Committee
 - d. Rape Crisis Scotland

- e. Scottish Women's Aid
- f. Zero Tolerance
- g. Any community council within or neighbouring the locality in which the premises is situated

Making an Objection

- 4.5 It is possible to lodge an objection against the grant of an application for a SEV licence. Objections must be made in writing (emails are accepted) and sent to the Licensing Service (licensing@edinburgh.gov.uk) within 28 days of the application being advertised. If an objection is lodged out with this period, it must explain why it has been lodged late. It would then be a matter for the Licensing Sub-Committee to consider if it is satisfied that there is sufficient reason why it was not made in the time required.
- 4.6 To be considered as competent, objections should include the following information:
- a. The name and address of the person or organisation making the objection
 - b. The premises to which the objection relates
 - c. The objection must be signed by the objector, or on their behalf
- 4.7 Objections to a SEV application will be considered by the Licensing Sub-Committee when determining the application. A copy of the general terms of the objection will be sent to the applicant, however certain contact details such as telephone numbers, email addresses and signatures will be removed. The name and address of any objector will not be provided to the applicant without the objector's consent.

Determining an Application

- 4.8 Every application for a SEV licence will be considered and determined at a meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee. As stated above, if any objections are received in relation to an application, they will also be considered at the Committee meeting.
- 4.9 Objectors will be given the opportunity to speak to their written objection at a meeting of the Committee. Similarly, applicants will be given the opportunity to speak to their application and address any questions that the Committee may have.
- 4.10 Under the terms of the 1982 Act, there are mandatory and discretionary

grounds for refusal of a SEV licence. The specific mandatory grounds for refusal are set out in section 9(3) of Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act, which states

“A licence under this Schedule shall not be granted -

- a) To a person under the age of 18;
- b) To a person who is for the time being disqualified under paragraph 13(10) or 19(5) below;
- c) To a person other than a natural person if any director of it or partner in it or any other person responsible for its management is disqualified under paragraph 13(10) or 19(5) below;
- d) To a person who has been convicted of an offence under paragraphs 19 to 21 below;
- e) To a person who is not resident in the United Kingdom or was not so resident throughout the period of six months immediately preceding the date when the application was made;
- f) To a body corporate which is not incorporated in the United Kingdom;
- g) To person who has, within the period of 12 months immediately preceding the date the application was made, been refused by the same local authority the grant or renewal of a licence under this Schedule for the premises, vehicle, vessel or stall in respect of which the application is made, unless the refusal has been reversed on appeal; or;
- h) To a person other than a natural person if any director of it or partner in it or any other person responsible for its management has within that period, been refused by the same local authority the grant or renewal of such a licence, unless the refusal has been reversed on appeal.”

4.11 Section 9(5) of Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act sets out the terms of the discretionary grounds on which a SEV application can be refused. They are as follows:

- a. That the applicant is unsuitable to hold a licence by reasons of having been convicted of an offence or for any other reason;
- b. That if the licence were to be granted or renewed, the business to which it relates would be managed by or carried on for the benefit of a person, other than the applicant, who would be otherwise refused the grant/renewal of a licence if they made the application themselves.
- c. That the number of sexual entertainment venues in the local authority area or relevant locality at the time the application is made is equal to or exceeds the number which the Council considers appropriate for their area or that locality;

- d. That the grant or renewal of the licence would inappropriate having regard:
- a) To the character of the relevant locality; or;
 - b) To the use to which any premises in the vicinity are put; or;
 - c) To the layout, character or condition of the premises, vehicle, vessel or stall in respect of which the application is made

Suitability of Applicant

- 4.12 In determining an application, the Committee will consider whether the applicant is or remains fit and proper to hold a licence. The Council does not expect any fines, arbitrary or otherwise, to be in place for performers, which could result in their loss of income. Additionally, the Council expect that house fees for performers will be transparent and agreed in advance. The Council does not expect that these would be subject to change at short notice, resulting in a loss of income to the performer. Where examples of fining or issues with house fees are brought to their attention, the Committee could take this into account when considering whether an applicant is or remains fit and proper to hold a SEV licence.

Variation of a SEV Licence

- 4.13 The licence holder of a SEV licence may apply to vary any term, condition or restriction placed upon the licence. The statutory requirements for advertising, giving notice and timeline for the consideration of the application are the same as those for initial grants or renewals as set out at section 4 of this policy.
- 4.14 Variation applications will be considered by the Licensing Sub-Committee where the applicant will be given an opportunity to speak to their application and answer any questions that Committee members may have. When determining an application, the Committee can either:
- a. Grant the variation as requested;
 - b. Make such variations as it thinks fit;
 - c. Refuse the application.
- 4.15 In the event of the Committee agreeing a condition or restriction other than the one sought in the original variation application, the decision will not take effect until the time for bringing an appeal has expired, or if an appeal is lodged, the abandonment of the appeal or the conclusion of the appeal, if found in favour of the Council.

Renewal Application

- 4.16 Provided an application for renewal has been accepted and deemed competent by the Licensing Service prior to the date of expiry, the licence shall be deemed to remain in force until such time as the renewal application has been determined.
- 4.17 The statutory requirements for advertising and giving notice are the same as those applying to initial grants. Furthermore, renewal applications will be considered by the Licensing Sub-Committee.

Right to Appeal

- 4.18 An appeal against the decision of the Licensing Sub-Committee in respect of the grant, renewal, variation or refusal of a licence must be made to the Sheriff Court within 28 days of the decision being made.
- 4.19 Where an application for a licence is refused on the under paragraph 9(5)(c) or (d) of Schedule 2 of the Civic Government Act 1982, the applicant can only challenge the refusal by way of judicial review.

Conditions

- 5.1 The Licensing Sub-Committee is able to grant or renew a SEV licence on such terms and conditions as it considers appropriate. This will typically take the form of standard conditions which are applicable to all SEV licences. Additional conditions may also be placed on the licence which are specific to the applicant or premises.
- 5.2 The Committee agreed a set of standard conditions on 31 March 2022 and these shall apply to every licence granted, varied or renewed by the Committee, unless they have been expressly excluded or varied. The standard conditions are found at Appendix 1 of this policy.
- 5.3 It is an offence to operate a SEV without a licence or contravene a condition of any granted licence. Licence holders found to breaching the terms of their licence may be referred to the Licensing Sub-Committee for suspension or revocation of the SEV licence.

Relationship with Other Strategies

- 6.1 Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls was first published in 2014 and last updated in 2018 It sets out a definition of violence against women and girls which includes 'commercial

sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography, and human trafficking.’ Whilst recognising the conflict between this definition and the licensing of sexual entertainment venues, the Scottish Government intends that it will help to ensure that such activities take place in safe and regulated environments

Related Documents

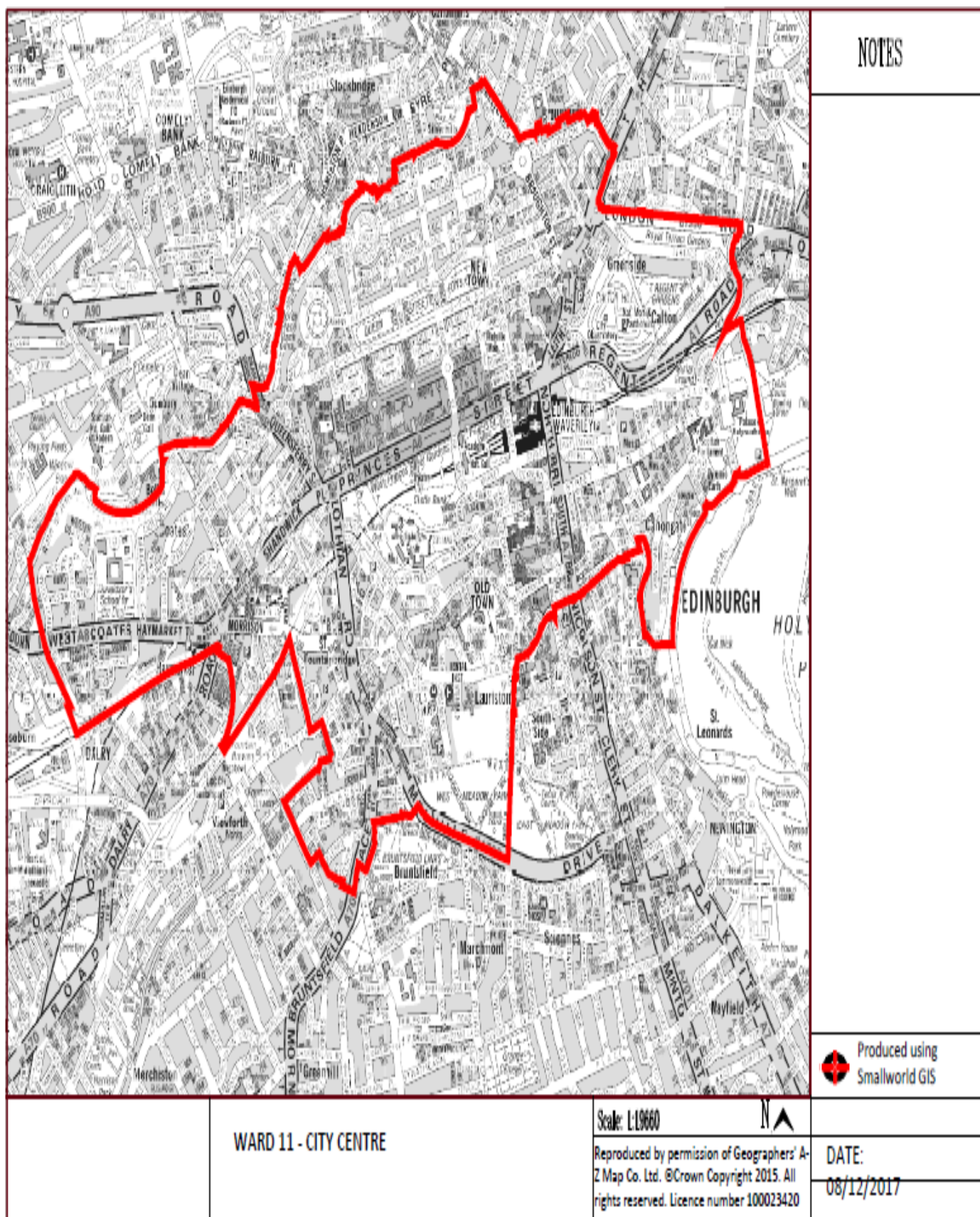
- 7.1 [Air Weapons & Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2015 – Sexual Entertainment Venues– Update After Initial Consultation – Regulatory Committee – 21 October 2019](#)
- 7.2 [Civic Government \(Scotland\) Act 1982 – Sections 45A-45C](#)
- 7.3 [Provisions for Licensing of Sexual Entertainment Venues: Guidance – Scottish Government](#)

Review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently, if required.

Sexual Entertainment Venue Licensing Policy – Appendix 1

Map of City Centre - Ward 11



Appendix 3 – Decision of the Council on 27 October 2022 – Approved adjusted motion by Councillor Younie:

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Younie:

- 1) To note that the key aims of civic licensing were the preservation of public safety and the prevention of crime and disorder.
- 2) To note the implementation of a Nil Cap policy on Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) on 1 April 2023, which may lead to the closure of four venues.
- 3) To note that entertainers may continue to work in the industry despite possible closures and may be working in less safe and completely unregulated environments.
- 4) To recognise that this could lead to the further deterioration of performers' safety in the city.
- 5) To agree, therefore, that a report shall be presented to the Regulatory Committee within two cycles to consider this.
- 6) To recognise that the Equally Safe strategy for ending violence against women and girls expected that we work with others to reduce the demand for Commercial Sexual Exploitation.
- 7) To agree that the Council should work with partners to put in place a programme of support for entertainers who may be affected by these closures.

Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015

Guidance on the Provisions for Licensing of Sexual Entertainment Venues and Changes to Licensing of Theatres

AIR WEAPONS AND LICENSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 2015

GUIDANCE ON THE PROVISIONS FOR LICENSING OF SEXUAL ENTERTAINMENT VENUES AND CHANGES TO LICENSING OF THEATRES

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Introduction

The key aims of civic licensing are the preservation of public safety and order and the prevention of crime. A specific licensing regime for sexual entertainment venues will allow local authorities to consider local circumstances in setting the number of venues able to operate within their areas (this could be nil) and to exercise appropriate control and regulation of these venues.

Local authorities that do not currently have any sexual entertainment venues may wish to carefully consider whether there would be merit in making a resolution and setting a number (including nil) of such venues for their area to allow them to control the number of sexual entertainment venues operating in their area in the future.

It is important to note that The Licensing (Amendment) (EU Exit) (Scotland) Regulations 2019¹ amend Schedule 2, paragraphs 9(3)(e) and 9(3)(f) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982² (the 1982 Act). This change prevents the granting of a licence for a sex shop or sexual entertainment venue to a person who is not resident in the United Kingdom (the UK) or was not resident throughout the 6 month period prior to the application being made. It also prevents the granting of a licence to a body corporate not incorporated in the UK. These provisions come into force on exit day. The previous residency restrictions for granting a licence were to a member state of the EU.

A published sexual entertainment policy statement will provide local communities with a clear indication of the local authority's policy and examples of licensing conditions, along with enforcement details. The policy should also demonstrate how the local authority intends to help protect the safety and wellbeing of performers, customers and the wider public.

Legislation

- 1. The Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015³ (the 2015 Act) received Royal Assent on 4 August 2015. The provisions of the Act which relate to the licensing of sexual entertainment venues (SEV) come into force on 26 April 2019. However this is not a mandatory licensing regime and it is for local authorities to determine whether they wish to licence SEV, whether to limit their numbers and to determine individual licence applications. When doing so local authorities will need to consider the implications, opportunities and risks of their decisions.**
- 2. Section 76 of the 2015 Act inserts sections 45A, 45B and 45C into Part III of the 1982 Act. These provisions establish a specific licensing regime for the regulation of SEV and allow for greater local control over the provision of such**

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2019/6/contents/made>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1982/45/contents>

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/10/contents>

venues. Although licensing of SEV follows a similar pattern to that covered by Part I, Part II and Schedule 1 of the 1982 Act, local authorities may wish to note that these provisions have no application to Part III licences which are solely governed by Schedule 2 of the Act.

3. While this guidance is primarily in respect of the SEV licensing regime, it also includes details at paragraphs 91-92 of the repeal of the existing mandatory licensing regime for theatrical performances under section 12 of the Theatre Act 1968 and the ability of local authorities to licence theatres under the more flexible public entertainment licence requirements contained within the 1982 Act. **To address concerns raised, it is worth emphasising that theatrical performances which are not provided solely or principally for the purpose of sexually stimulating the audience will not be classed as sexual entertainment. As a result, the use of the premises for those performances will not require an SEV licence.**
4. Information in respect of both SEV and the theatre provisions is provided at: paragraphs 93-96 on commencement; at paragraphs 97-102 on transitional provisions; and at paragraphs 103-107 on the consequential changes required to The Licensing Conditions (Late Opening Premises) (Scotland) Regulations 2007 and The Premises Licence (Scotland) Regulations 2007 as a result of the creation of a SEV licensing regime and the changes to theatre licensing.
5. This guidance also makes reference to the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 (the 2005 Act⁴), which provides a licensing regime for the sale of alcohol. The 1982 Act, and the 2005 Act provide for a variety of different licences, and it is possible that the same premises may require more than one licence. Care should therefore be taken to ensure that the requirement to obtain a licence and any exemptions from the requirement to obtain a licence are carefully considered.
6. The 1982 Act sets out that civic licensing decisions are the responsibility of the licensing authority, a committee made up of locally elected councillors. The 2005 Act provides that alcohol licensing decisions are the responsibility of the local Licensing Board. These terms are used throughout this guidance and refer to the licensing functions of a local authority. Where different committees are involved in the licensing of the same business, then it can be useful to co-ordinate in relation to the setting of licence conditions etc.
7. Where a local authority opts to licence SEV within its area, the provisions at paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act will apply in their area and a licence will be required for premises operated as SEV. Premises are classed as an SEV where sexual entertainment is provided before a live audience for the direct or indirect financial benefit of the organiser. Sexual entertainment is any live performance or live display of nudity provided for the sole or principal purpose of sexual stimulation of members of the audience. However, premises where sexual entertainment is provided on no more than 4 occasions in a twelve month period are not to be treated as SEV. The *Licensing of sexual entertainment*

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/16/contents>

venues: interpretation section at paragraphs 84-90 of this guidance provides additional definitions and further information.

8. The passage of the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill through the Scottish Parliament includes further documentation that may be of interest including the Explanatory Notes and Policy memorandum⁵.

The Guidance

9. Section 45B(7) of the 1982 Act requires that, in carrying out its functions, a local authority must have regard to guidance issued by Ministers. This non-statutory guidance is intended to assist local authorities, but other parties such as the Police, venue operators, relevant organisations and performers may also find it useful.
10. *A Consultation on Guidance on the Provisions for Licensing of Sexual Entertainment Venues and Changes to Licensing of Theatres*⁶ was published on 1 November 2017 with a closing date of 7 February 2018. The responses received were carefully considered and were of assistance in finalising this guidance.
11. The guidance should be read in conjunction with the relevant legislation, particularly Part III and Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act and the relevant accompanying documents for the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015. This guidance does not represent legal advice and any individual or organisation reading this guidance should not treat this guidance as a replacement for independent legal advice. The interpretation of the 1982 Act, as amended by the 2015 Act, is ultimately a matter for the courts.

Background

12. On 24 March 2005, previous Scottish Ministers set up a Working Group on Adult Entertainment to review the scope and impact of adult entertainment activity and make recommendations on the way forward. This followed concerns expressed about the lack of controls on adult entertainment activity. The Group⁷ made a number of recommendations aimed at improving standards in the industry, ensuring the safety of performers and customers, regulating the impact on the locality, improving local accountability and control and ensuring that there was no inadvertent impact on artistic freedoms.
13. At that time, it was felt that, as SEV also sold alcohol and therefore required alcohol licences, it was best left to local licensing boards to regulate adult entertainment via the existing licensing regime for alcohol.

⁵ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/76383.aspx>

⁶ <https://consult.gov.scot/justice/licensing-of-sexual-entertainment-venues/>

⁷ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2006/04/24135036/0>

14. In 2010 Sandra White MSP introduced amendments to provide for a specific system of licensing for sexual entertainment which were considered by the Scottish Parliament as part of its scrutiny of the Criminal Justice and Licensing Bill at Stages 2 and 3. The proposed provisions broadly mirrored those that had been introduced in England and Wales in section 27 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009. While the Scottish Government supported the proposals, Parliament rejected them due to concerns about the effect of operating a dual licensing system and concerns about the lack of opportunity to fully consider the proposals.
15. Since then, the Inner House of the Court Of Session in *BrightCrew Limited v City of Glasgow Licensing Board* ([2011] CSIH 46⁸) held that the licensing regime in the 2005 Act was limited to the regulation of the sale of alcohol and couldn't extend to matters not linked to the sale of alcohol. As a result, Scottish Ministers considered that a specific licensing regime for SEV was the best solution for future regulation of the industry. This approach would remove concerns around Licensing Boards attempting to use the alcohol licensing regime to regulate matters that go beyond the remit of that regime.
16. A consultation was published in June 2013⁹ (the consultation) inviting views on the establishment of a licensing regime based on the draft provisions that Ms White had proposed in 2010. Section 76 of the 2015 Act amends the 1982 Act to provide for this.

Relationship with other Strategies

17. In response to the consultation there was wide support for the principle of a new licensing regime including from local authorities, Police, violence against woman and gender groups.
18. However, some concerns were raised that licensing SEV encouraged unhealthy attitudes to women and therefore damaged society as a whole.
19. The Scottish Government accepts the freedom of adults to engage in legal activities and employment. However, it will continue to promote, through all relevant means, gender equality and actions that tackle out-dated attitudes that denigrate or objectify particular groups or individuals.
20. *Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls*¹⁰ was first published in 2014 and updated in 2016 and again in 2018. It sets out a definition of violence against women and girls which includes 'commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and human trafficking'.

⁸<https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/search-judgments/judgment?id=2a9286a6-8980-69d2-b500-ff0000d74aa7>

⁹ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/06/3607>

¹⁰ <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/violence-against-women-and-girls/equally-safe-strategy/>

21. Whilst recognising the conflict between this definition and the licensing of SEV, this guidance will help to ensure that such activities take place in safe and regulated environments. When deciding whether to licence, and whether to limit, SEV in their area, local authorities will need to consider the interaction with their own local policies and strategies, as well as the legal implications around limiting a legitimate business activity to minimise the risk of legal challenge.
22. Equally Safe's aim is to work collaboratively with key partners across all sectors to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls and the attitudes which perpetuate them. Its priorities are: achieving gender equality; intervening early and effectively to prevent violence; and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people. *Equally Safe: A Delivery Plan for Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls*¹¹ was published in November 2017. It will help to ensure that the ambitions of the Equally Safe Strategy make a tangible difference.
23. The *Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy*¹², required under section 35 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 was published on 30 May 2017. It sets out the Scottish Government's strategy to work with partners to make Scotland a more hostile place for human trafficking. The aims of the strategy are to identify victims and support them to safety and recovery; identify perpetrators and disrupt their activity; and address the conditions that foster trafficking and exploitation.
24. In developing the licensing regime, care has therefore been taken to balance the freedom of individuals to engage in legal employment and activities with the right of local authorities to exercise appropriate control and regulation of SEV that operate within their areas.
25. Ministers consider that local authorities are best placed to reflect the views of the communities they serve and to determine whether SEV should be licensed within their areas and, if so, under what conditions.
26. A local authority which chooses to licence SEV will have to publish an SEV policy statement, developed in consultation with relevant interest groups (including violence against women partnerships) which will provide local communities with a clear indication of the local authority's policy. Where an SEV licence is granted, licence conditions, along with enforcement, will help reduce the risk of criminality such as prostitution and human trafficking; and help protect the safety and wellbeing of performers, customers and the wider public. The community should, in turn, benefit from a safe, regulated environment.
27. Local authorities will have to consider the circumstances pertaining in their local area and their statutory obligations (including, but not limited to, their obligations under the EU Services Directive¹³ and the Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act

¹¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/11/5647>

¹² <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/05/6059>

¹³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:376:0036:0068:EN:PDF>

2014¹⁴). Local authorities will also have to consider the rights SEV operators may have under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) particularly under Article 1, Protocol 1 (peaceful enjoyment of possessions) and Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the Convention. ECHR issues are discussed further at paragraphs 73-77.

Licensing of sexual entertainment venues

28. Section 76 of the 2015 Act introduces a discretionary licensing regime for SEV. It achieves that by amending the existing licensing regime for sex shops provided for in Part III and Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act so that the provisions, with necessary modification, also apply to SEV. It is important to emphasise that it is not mandatory for a local authority to licence SEV. A flowchart setting out the steps local authorities are required to take is at Annex A.

29. When deciding whether to licence SEV, local authorities should obtain independent legal advice in order to ensure that they are able to mitigate the risks of legal challenge to an acceptable level. They should also take into account the Public Sector Equality Duty¹⁵ to which local authorities are required to pay 'due regard' when carrying out their functions and the specific duty¹⁶ to assess and review policies and practices.

Local Authority Resolution

30. Where a local authority decides to licence SEV, section 45B of the 1982 Act, requires the local authority to pass a resolution in order for SEV licensing to have effect in their area. It also requires at section 45C that where a local authority decides to licence SEV it must prepare an SEV policy statement and further information on this is provided at paragraphs 38-57.

31. In considering whether to pass a resolution a local authority should consider, whether they will wish to control SEV even if no such premises are currently in operation in their area. If there is no resolution in place, then no licence is required to operate an SEV. Existing SEV could continue to operate, new SEV could come into operation, without an SEV licence. Sexual entertainment in those venues would remain largely unregulated. If a resolution is passed, existing SEV and any new SEV, will require an SEV licence.

32. In considering whether to pass a resolution to licence SEV, local authorities may wish to look carefully at their localities and consider a range of issues such as:

- whether there are any sexual entertainment venues already operating;
- the location of schools;

¹⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/3/contents>

¹⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

¹⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2012/162/regulation/5/made>

- the location of places of worship;
- the location of heavily residential areas;
- the location of women's refuges and shelters and other services focussed on supporting women, children and young people;
- whether there have been incidents involving anti-social behaviour, sexual assaults, prostitution or more minor harassment reported in any particular area; and
- whether there have been incidents of human trafficking or exploitation locally.

33. Local authorities who have resolved to licence SEV must determine the appropriate number of SEV for both their area and for each relevant locality within their area (see paragraph 9(5A) of Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act). Paragraph 9(5)(c) of Schedule 2 allows local authorities to refuse applications on grounds that, at the time the application is determined, the number of SEV in the local authority's area or relevant locality is equal to or exceeds the number that the authority considers appropriate for their area or that locality.

34. Local authorities have extensive experience of engaging with local people and will know what works best in their individual areas. Local authorities may wish, as a matter of good practice, to seek the views of local people and businesses prior to deciding whether to pass a resolution. In doing so, local authorities may wish to make any relevant information available to local people in order to inform their understanding. Local authorities may also wish to engage with the operators of known SEV as soon as a decision has been made, to ensure that they are aware of what action they will need to take, and to seek input from the local Police Scotland human trafficking champion or the Human Trafficking Unit at Gartcosh.

35. In considering whether to pass a resolution to licence SEV, local authorities must also have cognisance of other relevant legislation such as the EU Services Directive, the Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Convention rights of SEV operators. Local authorities should consider whether the decision to licence SEV is proportionate and justifiable.

36. If licensing SEV, a local authority must determine, from time to time, the number of SEV that they consider appropriate for their area and each relevant locality. Nil may be considered the appropriate number. The determination should be publicised. Further guidance on what a local authority may wish to consider in determining numbers and localities is provided below in relation to developing the policy statement.

Specified Day

37. Where a local authority passes a resolution, it must specify a date from when it is to take effect in their area. This must be at least one year from the date the resolution is passed. The local authority must also publish notice that they have passed a resolution not less than 28 days prior to the date the resolution is to take effect. The notice must state the general effect of the licensing procedure

and provisions at Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act, as modified for SEV, and be published either electronically or in a local newspaper.

Statements of policy in relation to sexual entertainment venues

38. Section 45C of the 1982 Act requires that where a local authority has passed a resolution under section 45B(1) that a licensing regime for SEV will have effect in their area, they will then be required to prepare and publish an SEV policy statement. The statement of policy should set out and justify the position of the local authority with regards to licensing SEV and should support local authorities should they face any legal challenges.

Content

39. The policy statement should include details of the impact a local authority considers the licensing of SEV will have in its area. Section 45C(3) of the 1982 Act states:

“In preparing a SEV policy statement, a local authority must—

(a) consider the impact of the licensing of SEV in their area, having regard, in particular, to how it will affect the objectives of—

- (i) preventing public nuisance, crime and disorder,
- (ii) securing public safety,
- (iii) protecting children and young people from harm,
- (iv) reducing violence against women, and

(b) consult such persons or bodies as they consider appropriate.”

40. For the purposes of the section, “children” are defined as persons under the age of 16 and “young people” as persons aged 16 or 17.

41. Policy statements should be published at the same time and in the same manner as the notice of resolution is published i.e. it should be published not less than 28 days prior to the date the resolution is to take effect, either electronically or in a local newspaper.

42. The policy statement should provide local communities with a clear indication of the local authority’s policy and should also be consistent with the licensing objectives and procedures set out in the 1982 Act as amended.

43. The statement might include information on the locations where the local authority is likely to consider the operation of SEV to be appropriate or inappropriate. The statement could also be used to indicate how many SEV are considered to be appropriate for the local authority’s area or particular localities within its area. The reasons for these policy positions should also be provided.

44. In developing the statement, the local authority may also wish to take account of whether any SEV are already operating in its area under the existing regime for

alcohol licensing and, if so, whether they wish to continue to licence the same number of venues as are currently operating.

45. The local authority may wish to reflect on whether reducing the number of venues, or setting the number at zero, in their area will have a disproportionate effect on business. The local authority should also consider whether reducing the number of SEV in their area or setting the number at zero would create a risk of legal challenge (for example under ECHR or on grounds of reasonableness).
46. Where there are currently no sexual entertainment venues operating, a local authority may wish to consider if there may be benefit in making a resolution to give effect to the licensing regime even where it considers that the number should be set at zero. In setting the number at zero, a local authority will require to demonstrate proportionality by evidencing that the competing interests of SEV operators alongside those of the community had been fairly considered and appropriately balanced.
47. In developing the policy statement, we consider it best practice for local authorities to consult with persons with an interest and this should include organisations such as violence against women partnerships, child protection committees and community councils as well as Police Scotland and local businesses (including the operators of any existing SEV).
48. In exercising any functions in relation to the licensing of SEV, the local authority is required to have regard to their SEV licensing policy statement. It is also required, from time to time, to review the policy statement, revise it as appropriate and publish the revised statement. We suggest that it may be best practice to align the review of both the local authority's stated appropriate number of SEV and the policy statement. However it will be for individual local authorities to determine the timeframe for undertaking the reviews required.

Licensing Conditions

49. Under paragraph 9 of Schedule 2 to the 1982 Act local authorities have a power to impose reasonable licence conditions. In doing this local authorities need to be flexible in responding to each application and in some cases additional or more tailored conditions reflecting local circumstances may be appropriate.
50. Conditions are specific requirements that the licence holder must comply with, otherwise the licence could be revoked. Paragraph 19(1)(c) of Schedule 2 states that a licence holder who, without reasonable excuse, knowingly contravenes or permits the contravention of a specified condition will be guilty of an offence.
51. The local authority can attach standard conditions for all licences granted for SEV, they may also impose individual conditions to licences. By way of example, such licence conditions could regulate:
 - the display of advertisements on or connected to the venue;
 - the days and times when the premises may be used as a SEV;
 - the visibility of the interior of the SEV to passers-by; and

- the number of persons to be admitted to the premises.
52. The local authority should give careful consideration as to whether the condition proposed is necessary and, with the Brightcrew case in mind, whether it is linked to the regulation of sexual entertainment. The local authority should also consider whether, in all the circumstances, the condition is reasonable and proportionate and therefore not susceptible to challenge.
53. Any condition attached to the licence must be clear, so that the licence holder is aware of their obligation to comply.
54. Part of the local authority's role is to ensure improved working conditions and a safe environment for the women who work in SEV. The local authority may wish to encourage operators to actively identify potential victims of human trafficking in their recruitment procedures. Where a local authority is made aware of a person who is or appears to be a victim of human trafficking, they have a duty to notify Police Scotland.
55. The Association of Licensed Adult Entertainment Venues in Scotland has a toolkit, *A Guide for Employers and Contractors*¹⁷ which is intended to ensure that venues are operated in a fair manner, protecting human rights and that potential victims of human trafficking are identified in the recruitment process.
56. In terms of how a premises licensed as an SEV should be run, in addition to the minimum standards expected of workplaces through health and safety regulations, local authorities may wish to consider adopting some or all of the following non-exhaustive list of suggestions and develop them as model conditions within their Policy Statement:
- list of full names, dates of birth, nationality and contact details (address or telephone number) for all performers to be available on the premises for immediate production if requested by Police or local authority officers;
 - ensure immigration status is in order and actively seek to identify performers who may have been the victim of human trafficking;
 - employment of security guards;
 - use and storage of CCTV;
 - provision of hygienic changing and showering facilities and a toilet with access to hot water exclusively for the use of the performers;
 - set break times for performers;
 - the provision of a break room exclusively for the use of the performers;
 - performers to be escorted by security to nominated taxi or to their car at end of shift;
 - access to medical checks and sexual health advice to be provided on site;
 - the licence holder to ensure performers remain clothed outwith performance area;
 - the licence holder to ensure no physical contact between performers and customers;

¹⁷ <http://www.alaevs.co.uk/members/>

- the customers to be informed of rules of customer conduct that is deemed acceptable e.g. customers to remain fully clothed at all times and these rules displayed at appropriate locations within the venue licence holder to ensure customers do not seek sexual favours or offer performers payment in return for sexual favours;
- the licence holder to ensure customers do not to offer or ask for any form of contact details from performers;
- the licence holder to ensure customers do not to engage in any unlawful activity within the SEV;
- the licence holder to ensure no photographs or video recordings are taken of the performers.

57. It should be borne in mind that it is extremely likely that SEV will also require to have a premises licence under Part 3 of the 2005 Act and care will be required to ensure that the SEV licence conditions do not contradict the conditions applied to the alcohol licence. In the event that the SEV does not also require an alcohol licence, local authorities may wish to consider whether any of the conditions attached to such licences would be appropriate to that particular SEV.

Applications

58. The local authority resolution will specify a date from which the SEV licensing regime is to take effect in its area. Under paragraph 25(3) of Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act a local authority cannot consider any application for an SEV licence prior to the date specified in the resolution and cannot grant any licence until it has considered all applications received prior to that date.

59. Local authorities will therefore wish to consider developing new application forms specifically in respect of SEV licences. Authorities will also have to determine a date when these forms should be made available to operators / prospective operators. It may also be appropriate to intimate in the resolution when applications will be considered by the local authority.

60. Paragraph 25 of Schedule 2 also provides that where a SEV is trading in the area before the resolution has been published and before the specified day of effect has applied for a SEV licence under Schedule 2, then they may continue trading until the application is considered. If the application is refused they may continue to trade until the timescale for an appeal under paragraph 24 has lapsed or the appeal has been determined or abandoned.

61. We suggest that in considering an application for an SEV licence, with the view to reaching an evidence- based decision on whether it should be granted, local authorities will wish to look carefully at the proposed location and take account of:

- the existing character and function of the area in which it will be located;
- whether there are any schools near the vicinity of the SEV;
- whether there any places of worship in that vicinity;
- whether there are other relevant businesses or charities operating in the area e.g. homelessness shelters, women's refuges, supported accommodation, recovery units etc.;

- whether the SEV is close to heavily residential areas;
- whether there have been incidents involving anti-social behaviour, sexual assaults or more minor harassment reported in that area;
- the views of residents and other relevant interested persons as far as is possible¹⁸; and
- input from the local Police Scotland human trafficking champion or the Human Trafficking Unit at Gartcosh.

62. It is important to note that an SEV licence will be required for premises where sexual entertainment is provided on more than 4 occasions in a twelve month period even where that entertainment is booked by the person hiring the venue. Paragraphs 85-86 of this guidance provide additional definitions and further information regarding exemptions.

Consideration

63. Local authorities will follow the established procedure for considering applications laid out at Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act. The procedure is applicable to licensing sex shops and has been modified to apply to SEV. Paragraph 9(3) sets out a list of persons to whom a licence may not be granted and paragraph 9(5) lists grounds on which a local authority may refuse an application for the granting or renewal of a licence. Each licence application should be fully considered on its own merits. However note, under paragraph 9(5)(c), where the number of venues in the local authority's area or relevant locality at the time the application is made is equal to or exceeds the number which the local authority consider is appropriate for their area or that locality the local authority should refuse the application.

64. The provisions in relation to making an application for a licence or the renewal of a licence are detailed at paragraph 6 of Schedule 2. In considering an application, the local authority will wish to satisfy itself that the applicant is not an unsuitable person to hold a licence by reason of having been convicted of an offence or for any other reason.

65. Under paragraph 15 of Schedule 2, the local authority can at any time decide to vary a licence on any grounds it thinks fit. The local authority can revoke a licence in line with the provisions set out at paragraph 13 of Schedule 2.

66. A decision not to grant a licence or to revoke a licence may be subject to appeal under paragraph 24 of Schedule 2. An appeal would be to a Sheriff in the first instance and could be on the grounds that the authority erred in law, based their decision on an incorrect material fact, acted contrary to natural justice or exercised their discretion unreasonably.

67. Any appeal to a Sheriff in relation to a SEV licence must be made within 28 days of the date of the decision appealed against. However, where the application is

¹⁸ It should be noted that local authorities do not have a duty to engage in full neighbourhood notification or power to require applicants to do so.

refused under paragraph 9(5)(c) or (d) of Schedule 2, the applicant can only challenge the refusal by way of judicial review.

68. Under paragraph 12(2)(b) of Schedule 2 a local authority may grant an SEV licence for one year or such other period that it deems appropriate.

Notification

69. Applicants will require to advertise their applications for a licence in a local newspaper specified by the local authority and to display a notice on or near the relevant premises. However, a local authority may dispense with the requirement for an applicant to publish a notice in a newspaper and instead publish notice of the application electronically. The legislation imposes a further duty at paragraph 7(3C) of Schedule 2 requiring each applicant for a licence to operate an SEV to send a copy of their application to such persons or bodies as have been determined by the local authority within 7 days of making the application and to certify to the local authority that they have done so. There is also an obligation on local authorities at paragraph 7(3D), requiring them to determine which persons and bodies are to receive copies of applications and to publicise that list as they consider appropriate.

List of appropriate persons

70. In relation to notification of an SEV licence application, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice stated during Stage 3 consideration of the legislation:

“Although the current process already allows for robust notification procedures, with requirements for both newspaper advertising and notices to be publicly displayed, there are advantages in requiring specific notification to particular bodies that will have an interest in the licensing of sexual entertainment venues. There is a practical advantage in ensuring important stakeholders, including violence against women partnerships and community councils are notified of applications early, so that they have sufficient time to consider applications and to make such representations to the authority as they consider appropriate. There is also an advantage in that it will send a very clear message that groups identified as being appropriate to receive copies of the application, including violence against women partnerships and community groups, are at the heart of the licensing process.”

71. In line with this, we suggest that it is essential to ensure that those with an interest are notified as early as possible and that particular organisations such as violence against women partnerships and community councils should be considered important stakeholders in the licensing process. They should therefore be included on the published local authority list of those who are to receive copies of applications.
72. Local authorities may also wish to consider including on the list local businesses, schools, places of worship and child protection committees, along with anyone else they consider appropriate.

ECHR Issues

73. When taking a decision to refuse an application local authorities should take account of any rights SEV operators may have, particularly under:

Article 1, Protocol 1 of the European Convention of Human Rights
Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law..) and

Article 10 –

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

74. Local authorities may wish to consider whether there is any interference with the applicant's human rights. And if so is it necessary and proportionate for the prevention of disorder or crime, the protection of health or the protection of the rights and freedom of others and whether the interference can be justified in the general public interest.

75. In deciding whether or not to grant a licence for an SEV, local authorities should also bear in mind the rights provided for at the following ECHR Articles

Article 3

No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 4

1. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.

2 No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

Article 14

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

76. Further information can be found in the Equality and Human Rights Commission Freedom of Expression Legal Framework guidance¹⁹ which explains the legal framework which protects freedom of expression and the circumstances in which that freedom may be restricted in order to prevent violence, abuse or discrimination.

77. In implementing the SEV legislative provisions local authorities will wish to ensure that they do so in compliance with the Convention rights and that they put in place flexible policies which take account of the competing interests of individuals alongside those of the community.

Fees

78. Paragraph 18 of Schedule 2 provides that a local authority must charge a reasonable fee which is sufficient to meet the expenses incurred by the authority in exercising its functions under the Schedule. In setting fees, local authorities will wish to have regard to the EU Services Directive. The R (on the application of Hemming (t/a Simply Pleasure Ltd) and others) (Respondents) v Westminster City Council (Appellant) [2015 and 2017]²⁰ rulings may also be of interest.

Enforcement

79. Offences and sanctions which relate to SEV licensing fall wholly under Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act and are set out in paragraph 19 of Schedule 2. Local authorities will wish to be aware that these provisions only apply where a resolution to licence SEV has been made.

80. The powers to enter and inspect and to enter and search licensed SEV are set out at paragraphs 20 and 21 of Schedule 2. These are similar to the provisions relating to Part II licences.

Conclusion

81. The 1982 Act makes clear that any decision made by the local authority, when considering applications for SEV licences, should be reasonable. This applies to fees, conditions which may be added to the licence, and to the time taken to consider the application.

82. The local authority should consider the facts of individual licence applications, and make decisions which are based on local priorities and circumstances.

83. The local authority should, where possible, ensure that there is consistency in these decisions, and in the conditions which may be attached to any licence granted.

¹⁹ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/freedom-expression-legal-framework>

²⁰ <https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/uksc-2013-0146.html>

Licensing of sexual entertainment venues: interpretation

84. Part III of the 1982 Act currently allows local authorities to control the number and location of sex shops in their area and Schedule 2 contains the detailed licensing procedures and provisions for sex shops. Section 76 of the 2015 Act creates a new licensing regime for SEV. It inserts sections 45A - 45C into Part III of the 1982 Act; modifies Schedule 2 so that it applies when a local authority resolves to licence SEV; and amends the title of Part III to “Control of sex shops and sexual entertainment venues”.

Definitions

85. Section 76(3) inserts an interpretation section, which underpins the SEV licensing regime, into the 1982 Act at Part III, section 45A. The relevant definitions are:

“(2) “Sexual entertainment venue” means any premises at which sexual entertainment is provided before a live audience for (or with a view to) the financial gain of the organiser.

(3) For the purposes of that definition—

“audience” includes an audience of one,

“financial gain” includes financial gain arising directly or indirectly from the provision of the sexual entertainment,

“organiser”, in relation to the provision of sexual entertainment in premises, means—

(a) the person (“A”) who is responsible for—

(i) the management of the premises, or

(ii) the organisation or management of the sexual entertainment, or

(b) where A exercises that responsibility on behalf of another person (whether by virtue of a contract of employment or otherwise), that other person,

“premises” includes any vehicle, vessel or stall but does not include any private dwelling to which the public is not admitted,

“sexual entertainment” means—

(a) any live performance, or

(b) any live display of nudity,

which is of such a nature that, ignoring financial gain, it must reasonably be assumed to be provided solely or principally for the purpose of sexually stimulating any member of the audience (whether by verbal or other means).

(4) For the purposes of the definition of “sexual entertainment”, “display of nudity” means—

(a) in the case of a woman, the showing of (to any extent and by any means) her nipples, pubic area, genitals or anus,

(b) in the case of a man, the showing of (to any extent and by any means) his pubic area, genitals or anus.”

Exemptions

86. However, premises where sexual entertainment is provided on no more than 4 occasions in a twelve month period are not to be treated as SEV. This exemption is to avoid drawing into the SEV licensing regime venues where the main purpose is clearly not to provide regular sexual entertainment e.g. venues which have the very odd stag or hen party providing such entertainment. Section 45A(10) specifies how occasional use is to be calculated:

“(a) each continuous period during which sexual entertainment is provided on the premises is to be treated as a separate occasion, and
(b) where the period during which sexual entertainment is provided on the premises exceeds 24 hours, each period of 24 hours (and any part of a period of 24 hours) is to be treated as a separate occasion.”

87. It is important to note that an SEV licence will be required where such entertainment occurs on more than 4 occasions in a twelve month period even where that entertainment is booked by the person hiring the venue. It is also important that any premises where sexual entertainment may be performed are properly supervised, as breach of the above limit without a licence is an offence.

Sex shops

88. Section 45A expressly states that sex shops are not SEV and provides a power to allow Ministers to specify other premises which do not fall into the category of SEV. A further power is provided so that Ministers can specify descriptions of performances or displays of nudity that are not to be treated as sexual entertainment for the purposes of the legislation.

Under 18s

89. Paragraph 19(1) of Schedule 2 of the 1982 Act provides that the employment of anyone under the age of 18 in an SEV is an offence. Section 45B(6)(g) of the 1982 Act modifies paragraph 19(1)(e) of Schedule 2 in respect of SEV to make it an offence for a licence holder or their agents to knowingly permit a person under the age of 18 entry to the SEV at a time when sexual entertainment is being provided, or at any other time without reasonable excuse. An example of a reasonable excuse might be where a plumber's mate is called upon to fix an emergency leak. It is worth noting that the reasonable excuse defence only applies where entry to the SEV is knowingly permitted to a person under the age of 18 at a time when sexual entertainment is **not** being provided – there is no reasonable excuse defence where entry is permitted at a time when sexual entertainment **is** being provided.

Public entertainment

90. Section 41 of the 1982 Act enables a licensing authority to direct that a public entertainment licence is necessary for certain types of activity. Section 41(2) of the 1982 Act provides that a “place of public entertainment” is any place where members of the public are admitted or may use any facilities for the purposes of entertainment or recreation. Section 76(2) of the 2015 Act amends section 41(2) of the 1982 Act to exclude a sexual entertainment venue from being licensed under a public entertainment licence.

Licensing of Theatres

Repeal of existing mandatory licensing provisions

91. The provisions at section 74 of the 2015 Act repeal the existing mandatory requirement for theatrical performances to be licensed under the Theatre Act 1968²¹ (the 1968 Act) and supporting provisions in the 1968 Act that allow for powers of entry and inspection. Section 74 of the 2015 Act also removes the exemption for premises licensed under the 1968 Act from the public entertainment licensing regime in the 1982 Act. This means that local authorities will be able to licence theatres under the public entertainment licence requirements contained in section 41 of the 1982 Act. Section 74 also inserts an equivalent of the anti-censorship provisions from the 1968 Act into the 1982 Act, so that licensing authorities will not be able to censor theatrical performances under the public entertainment licensing regime within the 1982 Act.

Local Authority resolution

92. Following the repeal of the theatre licensing provisions within the 1968 Act, local authorities may wish to consider making a public entertainment licensing resolution, or vary an existing resolution, under section 9 of the 1982 Act in order to require theatres to obtain a public entertainment licence. This requires local consultation, publicity and a 9 month period of notice before having effect. Local authorities are familiar with setting a resolution to bring activities within the scope of public entertainment licensing as the public entertainment licensing regime is currently used for licensing activities such as concerts, funfairs, variety shows etc. Having the local authority set out the scope of the public entertainment regime allows for greater flexibility and local authorities will, for example, be able to exclude premises offering plays to very small audiences from the licensing requirement where they consider that appropriate and proportionate.

Commencement of licensing of theatres and sexual entertainment venues

93. The Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 (Commencement No. 1) Order brought section 76(1) and 76(3) into force on 1 December 2015 for the purpose of inserting section 45A into the 1982 Act, but only for the purposes of

²¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/54>

making orders under section 45A(7)(b) and (11) of that Act. These provisions enable subordinate legislation to be made under the 1982 Act.

94. The provisions at section 74 and the outstanding provisions at section 76 of the 2015 Act are fully commenced by the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 (Commencement No.9 and Transitional Provisions) Order 2019.
95. In commencing the primary legislation, careful consideration was given as to the transitional arrangements for the repeal of existing legislation and the commencement of the new licensing regimes in the 2015 Act. Any necessary consequential changes to existing secondary legislation brought about by the commencement of the 2015 Act provisions was also considered.
96. The transitional arrangements, and the consequential amendments to existing legislation, required as a result of the commencement of sections 74 and 76 of the 2015 Act are detailed below.

Transitional provisions

Section 74 - Theatres

97. To ensure a smooth transition from the mandatory theatre licensing regime under the 1968 Act to the optional public entertainment licensing regime within the 1982 Act the amendment to the public entertainment licensing regime will be commenced first and the repeal of the theatre licensing regime will follow at a later date. This will give local authorities sufficient time to consider whether to licence theatres under the 1982 Act and for any resolution under section 9 of the 1982 Act to take effect before the licensing regime under the 1968 Act ends.
98. This means that theatre licences will continue until the repeal of the 1968 Act provisions but, during that timeframe, local authorities will be able to introduce a public entertainment licensing regime for theatres to take effect from the date of repeal. This will enable local authorities which wish to continue licensing theatres to ensure that public entertainment licences will come into force immediately on the repeal of theatre licences, leaving no period in between where theatres are unlicensed.

Section 76 – SEV

99. Section 45B(1) - (3) of the 1982 Act provides:

“(1) A local authority may resolve that Schedule 2 (as modified for the purposes of this section) is to have effect in their area in relation to SEV.

(2) If a local authority passes a resolution under subsection (1), Schedule 2 (as so modified) has effect in their area from the day specified in the resolution.

(3) The day mentioned in subsection (2) must not be before the expiry of the period of one year beginning with the day on which the resolution is passed.”

100. If a local authority chooses to introduce a licensing regime for SEV they will first require to pass a resolution under section 45B of the 1982 Act. Following a local authority resolution being passed to licence SEV, existing SEV will require to apply for an SEV licence but will be able to continue to trade without a licence until the final determination of that application. The existence of a premises licence under the 2005 Act will be no guarantee that an SEV licence will be granted for those premises – the SEV licensing regime and the alcohol licensing regime regulate two different activities.

101. Local authorities may wish to be aware of court judgements in:

- Thompson R v Oxford City Council [2013] EWHC 1819 (admin) (28 June 2013)²² and
- Thompson R v Oxford City Council & Anor [2014] EWCA Civ 94 (11 February 2014)²³

102. The ‘Oxford’ cases stressed that the grant of a licence should not be viewed as a grant for eternity and that a new licensing committee can take a different view of the same facts.

Consequential Amendments in relation to alcohol –

The Licensing Conditions (Late Opening Premises) (Scotland) Regulations 2007

103. Following a review of secondary legislation we noted that amendments are required to secondary legislation related to alcohol licensing, namely **The Licensing Conditions (Late Opening Premises) (Scotland) Regulations 2007**²⁴ (the Regulations). These alcohol regulations include a definition of adult entertainment and a reference to theatre licensing.

104. The Regulations specify conditions which must be imposed by a Licensing Board on the granting of an alcohol premises licence where the operating plan specifies that the premises will, on any occasion, be open for a continuous period beginning on one day and ending after 1am on the following day.

105. **Local authorities may wish to be aware that, as sexual entertainment venues now fall to be regulated under a separate specific licensing scheme it is no longer necessary to provide a definition of “adult entertainment” in these alcohol Regulations. Similarly, as licensing of theatres now falls under the optional public entertainment licensing scheme, reference to section 12 of the Theatres Act 1968 (which has been repealed by section 74(3) of the 2015 Act) is not required.**

²²<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2013/1819.html>

²³<http://cases436.rssing.com/browser.php?indx=12680078&item=11604>

²⁴<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2007/336/regulation/1/made>

106. The Regulations therefore will be amended in due course to remove the definition of “adult entertainment” in regulation 1(2) and the reference to “adult entertainment” in regulation 3(2)(a)(iii); the reference at regulation 3(3)(c) to section 12 of the Theatres Act 1968 will also be removed.

The Premises Licence (Scotland) Regulations 2007

107. Amendments are also required to **The Premises Licence (Scotland) Regulations 2007**²⁵. Regulation 6 and Schedule 5 of these regulations provide for an operating plan in respect of licensed premises. Question 5(e) refers to the activity “adult entertainment” which is undefined. **This will be amended to refer to “sexual entertainment” as defined at section 45A of the 1982 Act.** A reminder will also be included that, where a local authority has decided to licence SEV, unless the entertainment is to take place on no more than four occasions in a twelve month period, an application for a separate SEV licence will have to be made. Whether or not an SEV licence is granted will depend on the individual local authority’s consideration of the application in line with the resolution made. If no resolution has been made to licence SEV then no separate licence application will be required.

²⁵ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2007/452/pdfs/ssi_20070452_en.pdf

Consider whether to make a resolution to licence sexual entertainment venues (local authorities may wish to seek the views of local people; businesses and Police Scotland prior to deciding whether to pass a resolution)

- Licensing can take effect no earlier than one year from the date the resolution is passed.
- No resolution means no requirement for SEV operators to obtain a licence

If a decision is taken to licence SEV

- Develop a policy statement in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including violence against women partnerships, child protection committees and community councils.
- Engage with any existing SEV operators to ensure they are aware of what action they will need to take.

Publish the resolution and policy statement no later than 28 days before the date that the resolution comes into effect.

Determine and publish a list of who is to receive a copy of an application from the SEV licence applicant.

Consider all applications received by the date specified in the resolution to licence SEV under the procedure set out at Schedule 2 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. In granting or refusing SEV licence applications ensure that the competing interests of individuals alongside those of the community have been fairly considered and appropriately balanced.

Periodically review the number of SEV determined, policy statement and list of who is to receive a copy of an application.



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Appendix 5 – Email from Police Scotland

From: Happs, David <

Sent: 27 December 2022 14:12

To: Andrew Mitchell <

Afternoon

In relation to below, I've discussed it with Adam Brown and a few others in Division

Our position remains unchanged from the response to the consultation provided previously.

PSoS is committed to improving the safety and wellbeing of people, places and communities and supporting the licensing objectives as laid out in the Licensing (Scotland) Act. Relevant comment includes:

- As with alcohol licensing, PSoS Edinburgh Division considers SEVs should be specifically licensed in order that relevant conditions can be imposed on the venue to ensure the safety of staff and customers and afford the ability to enforce compliance with licensing objectives.
- Considerations for licensing of such venues should take into account existing SEVs already operating, how they operate and any locality sensitivities/community impact as well as any views of relevant parties.
- PSoS has no evidence that existing SEV's contribute negatively to crime or disorder in the city and, as such, we offer no opinion on the number of SEV's that should be licensed
- There are a number of considerations PSoS believe should be taken in to account in the development of any SEV Policy statement – these include but are not limited to the conduct and management of premises, age restrictions, responsibilities in regard to the safety of all staff, security of premises/CCTV and advertising.

Appendix 6

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Younie:

- 1) To note that the key aims of civic licensing are the preservation of public safety and the prevention of crime and disorder.
- 2) To note the implementation of a Nil Cap policy on Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) on 1 April 2023, which may lead to the closure of four venues.
- 3) To note that entertainers may continue to work in the industry despite possible closures and may be working in less safe and completely unregulated environments.

The sex industry is a term collectively used to describe a number of activities including, but not limited to, sexual entertainment. All activities encompassed by the sex industry are considered forms of Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and defined as Violence Against Women and Girls in the Equally Safe Strategy:

Violence Against Women and Girls encompasses (but is not limited to): [...]

Commercial Sexual Exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and trafficking. (p.12)

Performers at SEVs are a diverse group, many of whom may be involved in different aspects of the sex industry, or possibly only in sexual entertainment. They may also perform at SEVs as a full-time job, or on a part-time basis to support other activities, for example studies. Some might be facing additional barriers such as gender-based violence, alcohol and drug issues, unemployment or homelessness; others may not be affected by any other issues.

The argument that the closure of SEVs will lead performers to less safe and unregulated environments is inaccurate, as it operates on the assumption that the current employment conditions in SEVs in Edinburgh and beyond are regulated and safe. This is not the case.

Currently, SEVs in Edinburgh are operating to the conditions set out by the Council's current licensing policy. This dictates the requirements for the operation of SEVs, and sets our guidelines for the performers' safety. However, this policy can only go so far in regulating performers' work, and only insofar as the activities concerned take place inside SEVs. This does not regulate activities defined as CSE that are linked to SEVs but that are completely unregulated, for example, arrangements made in SEVs for sex to be purchased later outside the venues ([one-third of Scottish sex buyers arrange to buy sex in strip clubs](#)); similarly,

performers have repeatedly raised the issue of [precarious work in SEVs](#), including their employment as ‘independent contractors’ rather than workers. Women are required to pay an arbitrary fee to perform at any given venue, keeping any income they make during their performance; this risks leaving performers at a financial loss at the end of any shift and there is currently no regulation preventing this from occurring.

Should SEVs be required to close in Edinburgh from April 2023, it is possible that performers may continue to work in the sex industry, either in other cities or other parts of the sex industry. However, it is also entirely possible that many will choose to exit the sex industry altogether, opting for more secure employment elsewhere.

- 4) To recognise that this could lead to the further deterioration of performers’ safety in the city.

This statement contains a contradiction: by stating that performers’ safety in the city can be *further* deteriorated through the closure of SEVs, the statement implicitly recognises that performers’ safety is currently far from secured. As mentioned previously, SEV performers are faced with precarious working conditions due to their self-employed status, which can lead to a loss of income. Further, current SEV regulation as part of the Council’s licensing policy acts as a guidance for the operation of SEVs, and does little to secure performers’ safety both within but also beyond the SEVs (for example following a shift while making their way home, or when paid sex has been organised in a SEVs).

The precarious and often dangerous nature of working in SEVs can be evidenced by accounts of performers (for example in this article in [The Atlantic](#)) where ‘Liza’ states that *‘There’s no respect for what we do. [...] What we do could potentially be very dangerous. We could potentially have stalkers; someone could follow us home; we could have a customer who comes in to see us all the time and thinks he’s in love with us and you don’t know what he could do’*. The dangers involved can also be evidenced by the numerous websites offering safety advice for strippers, such as [TiltDiary](#) and [VerifyHim](#). Further, the [lap dancing factsheet](#) by NotBuyingIt.org.uk highlights that when performers break the rules they make more money, according to testimonials by performers themselves.

Most importantly, it must be noted that the sex industry is largely, if not completely unregulated, and this includes sexual entertainment: with various websites offering ‘stripper hire’ (for example [party-strip.co.uk](#), [entertain-ment.co.uk](#) and [celebratejustright.co.uk](#)) there is no way to ever fully, or even partially, regulate an unsafe industry.

- 5) To agree, therefore, that a report shall be presented to the Regulatory Committee within 2 cycles to consider this.
- 6) To recognise that the Equally Safe strategy for ending violence against women and girls expects that we work with others to reduce the demand for Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

Equally Safe is *'Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls'* (cover page). It defines stripping, lap dancing, prostitution, trafficking and pornography as Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE), and consequently as forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

As the aim of Equally Safe is *'preventing and eradicating'* Violence Against Women and Girls, Edinburgh's aspiration should be the complete eradication of demand for CSE – beyond its reduction. CSE is a form of VAWG as it contravenes Priority 1 of Equally Safe: *'Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls'* and Priority 2 of Equally Safe: *'Women and Girls Thrive as Equal Citizens- socially, culturally, economically and politically'* (p.5)

The strategy makes specific mention of CSE and the need to *'work together to develop thinking around Commercial Sexual Exploitation and ensure that women working in this area are protected from violence and abuse, and supported to exit situations where they are being sexually exploited for commercial purposes'* (p.38) It therefore makes it clear that reducing the harms caused by CSE is the first step to the ultimate goal of supporting women to exit the industry.

This creates a contradiction in the lack of definition of who will be working together. Currently the pro 'sex work' voices in Scotland argue that SEVs are safe for the performers employed within them and safer than other forms of CSE. We have addressed this issue and argued that this is not possible in any aspect of the sex industry. However, the suggestion that pro 'sex work' organisations should be involved in work to reduce the demand for CSE is also contradictory for the following reasons:

- Pro 'sex work' organisations and lobby groups vocally support the rights of women (and men) involved in the sex industry arguing that they should be free to be involved in CSE if they choose to. Their membership depends on the existence of an open and visible sex industry, compromising their objective view of the links between CSE and VAWG.
- The same organisations claim that those involved in the sex industry are forced to do so most often due to poverty and intersecting inequalities (racism, disability, exclusion from universal services). This in itself contradicts the argument of 'choice' as effectively the argument implies that people enter the sex industry through lack of other options and choices.
- Support in favour of CSE is most vociferous through people who have benefited from their involvement in the sex industry. However, in this discourse, the voices of survivors who have suffered horrific abuses in the sex industry, including sexual assault, violence, trafficking, financial exploitation, doxing, stalking, harassment and rape are often not included.

As one of three public protection committees in the City of Edinburgh Council, it is our duty of care to uphold and amplify the voices of women most vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, particularly those who have suffered through their involvement in CSE. The Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee holds an equal footing with the Child Protection and Adult Support and Protection Committees in Edinburgh, and its remit covers both child and adult protection. This is extremely important given the profiles of women involved in Scotland's sex industry.

According to a [2021 Snapshot briefing](#) by the [Encompass Network](#), out of 150 women in Scotland's sex industry supported over one week in November 2021:

- 36% had experienced childhood sexual abuse
- 83% disclosed they had experienced domestic abuse
- 21% had had children removed from their care
- 38.5% had been trafficked, and
- 20% disclosed that they first became involved in the sex industry before the age of 18.

These statistics raise further questions around the 'free choice' of involvement in the sex industry, as well as the less visible vulnerabilities for many women involved. It further highlights our duty to protect vulnerable women from exploitation, the need to work together to prevent future entry into the sex industry through effective and robust child protection, and our duty to support women to recover from traumatic experiences.

- 7) To agree that the Council should work with partners to put in place a programme of support for entertainers who may be affected by these closures

The Equally Safe Committee consists of partners from statutory and third sector services supporting women affected by VAWG and gender-based violence. There is a dedicated CSE subgroup attended by the City of Edinburgh Council (ESEC, Justice), NHS Lothian, Police Scotland, Edinburgh Women's Aid, Edinburgh Rape Crisis and Sacro working on a position statement and briefing paper on CSE for Edinburgh.

To improve understanding of the needs of entertainers who may choose to exit the industry, a private training event is being organised on 6 December 2022 as part of the 16 Days of Action campaign, organised and run by survivors who have exited the sex industry.

There is currently a plan organised by ESEC to ensure entertainers have the appropriate information and resources they will need to make informed decisions about their next steps should SEVs close in April 2023. This plan involves:

- Linking with the [WISHES](#) clinic (NHS Lothian) for outreach to the SEVs to discuss women's health needs
- Linking with employability services (Capital City Partnership, Access to Industry and Smart Works) to ensure women have information on future education, training and employment options that they can access
- Creating an information pack to be left at SEVs by NHS colleagues during wellbeing visits to include information about all support services that may be relevant to women to enable them to make informed choices about their lives should SEVs close on 1 April 2023.