

Licensing Committee – Meeting held on Wednesday, 30th October, 2024.

Present:- Councillors Khawar (Chair), Mohindra, Naveed, Parmar, W. Sabah, Shah and Tomar

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Nazir and Satti

PART 1

7. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

8. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 30th May 2024

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 30th May 2024 be approved as a correct record.

9. Guidance on Predetermination/ Predisposition - To Note

Members confirmed that they had read and understood the guidance on predetermination and predisposition.

10. Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028

The Committee received details of a report setting out the approval of the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) (2024-2028). The production of the AQAP was a statutory requirement of local authorities which have Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within their borough, under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 (amended 2021). The AQAP sets out the actions which the local authority was going to take to improve air quality in the borough.

The Group Manager (Carbon & Sustainability) highlighted that the AQAP addressed air pollution in the borough, focusing on Slough's five AQMAs. The plan had been designed to also address air pollution outside of these areas, as many measures proposed would help to reduce pollution borough wide.

It was noted that air quality in Slough had been gradually improving over the years. In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic brought widespread reductions in traffic as the population were instructed to stay at home, which resulted in a significant drop in NO₂ concentrations into 2021. The first full year of data without Covid-19 impact is 2022 as defined by Defra, however the monitoring data indicates that the pandemic may have had prolonged positive impacts on air quality beyond this.

As part of the AQAP development, source apportionment modelling was undertaken to understand the sources of air pollution in Slough. It was noted that diesel cars overall were the largest contributor towards NO₂ in the

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borough. As such, many of the measures within the action plan were tailored towards reducing emissions from road traffic.

Members were informed that Slough had a number of specific challenges which exacerbated and sustained air quality issues in the borough, as detailed within the report. The development of the AQAP had followed a rigorous process, as outlined by Defra within their Technical Guidance and the process was supported by a steering group of council representatives which was initiated in July 2023 as well as a public consultation. The consultation feedback would be used to inform the Implementation Plan, therefore ensuring that the main priorities and key areas of concern raised by respondents were addressed. The action plan would be delivered collaboratively across council departments and overseen by a newly formed public health led working group.

A number of points were raised in the ensuing discussion, which included the reasons why some of the air quality limits had been breached last year. Officers explained the various contributory factors including meteorological conditions and traffic levels. Members were supportive in principle of further measures being taken to improve air quality as it was a significant public health issue. Several specific issues were raised including the use of wood burning fires and steps that could be taken to reduce idling vehicles.

The Committee welcomed the comprehensive report and AQAP and agreed that it be recommended to Council for adoption.

Recommendation to Council –

That the Air Quality Action Plan (2024-2028) as set out in Appendix A be approved.

11. Review of Statement of Licensing Policy

The Trading Standards and Licensing Manager introduced the report, reminding the Committee that the Licensing Act 2003 required each local authority to prepare and publish a Statement of Licensing Policy. The policy statement set out how the authority intended to approach and exercise its licensing responsibilities and in particular how it would promote the four Licensing Objectives. The Committee was being asked to recommend approval of the statement to full Council.

It was noted that the current policy for the period 2019 to 2024 had been approved in February 2019 and was due to expire. Each authority was required to keep the statement of policy under review and update it no less than every five years.

Public consultation on the revised draft policy commenced on 17 September 2024 and concluded on 3 October 2024. Members were informed that there had been a very low response to the consultation, as it was generally realised that the discretion of the Council in reviewing the Policy was limited as the

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Licensing Act 2003, the Regulations under the Act and the Government Guidance closely prescribed how licensing authorities carried out their licensing functions. A summary of the minor changes, deletions and additions to the revised policy document were detailed as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Members of the committee expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the co-ordination between some Council departments, particularly licensing and planning, which was essential to ensure effective enforcement. A number of questions that were asked about the respective processes and legal framework for planning and licensing, particularly whether the statement of licensing policy could be strengthened. Members queried whether the policy could be tightened up so that when a licence was granted it would be subject to planning. It was recognised that the regimes were separate and there was an obligation to adhere to both any planning and licensing conditions. The planning department were a statutory consultee to a licensing application and could make representations.

Members asked that consideration be given to further practical and proactive steps the Council could take to ensure consistency between licensing and planning conditions before they were approved, and to strengthen enforcement in instances where licensing or planning conditions were breached. Officers were asked to carry out benchmarking of other relevant authorities licensing policies to ascertain whether any additional provisions or good practice could be incorporated into Slough's policy in the future which would improve the coordination and consistency of licensing and planning conditions. A report was requested to be brought back to a future meeting and it would be an option to review and amend the statement earlier than the five years if necessary.

The Committee discussed the process by which councillors were notified of licensing applications in their ward. It was responded that all applications were published on the Council website. Members requested that the licensing department in future notify councillors of applications for alcohol and late night refreshment licences in their ward. Other issues discussed included the processes for the licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs); and whether consideration had been given to any implications arising from Martyn's Law which related to the new duties on venues to improve public safety following the Manchester Areas terrorist attack in 2017.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Committee agreed to recommend approval of the Statement of Licensing Policy to full Council.

Recommended to Council –

That the draft revised Statement of Licensing Policy 2024-2029 be adopted as the Council's Licensing Policy.

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12. Members Attendance Record 2024/25

Resolved – That the record of Members' attendance for the 2024/25 municipal year be noted.

13. Date of Next Meeting - 5th February 2025

The date of the next scheduled meeting was confirmed as 5th February 2025.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.45 pm)