



City of Westminster

Licensing Committee communications strategy

Context

CLlr Antonia Cox, Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Licensing, and CLlr Angela Harvey, Chair of the Licensing Committee, have asked for a review of licensing communications. This strategy is therefore a horizon-scanning exercise which aims to set out what approach the Licensing team should take in communicating its activity in the year ahead. In addition, it will establish opportunities to leverage the work of the Council to promote the key messaging and priorities set out in the City for All: Year 3.

Objectives

Going forward, the overall objective of this strategy is to promote the work of Westminster City Council. The key objectives should therefore be as follows:

- Position Westminster as a leader and the home of exceptional practice;
- Communicate core messaging and council/ committee activity;
- Engage with business, and residential community; and
- Promote the “bigger picture” to the media.

Opportunities

The most significant area where we can bolster our communications offer is in the circulation of pro-active press releases which promote the ambitious council plans and associated licensing decisions. This is important both in terms of keeping businesses and residents alike informed of the Council’s work, but is also vital in ensuring that WCC’s voice is heard. There will be further scope to do this following the launch of the Licensing Charter.

A proactive approach will also help to build relationships with key journalists and influencers, for example those that have a relevant brief such as business or economy, as well as those that have written about or expressed an interest in the night-time economy.

Key areas of opportunity:

- Pro-active approach in distributing information about committee decisions; and
- Build relationships with key journalists.

Challenges

Main areas to consider:

- Ensure media output is proactive; and
- Issue swift statements to correct inaccurate reporting



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Tactics

There are a number of options going forward to promote licensing activity. Each can be tailored accordingly, depending on how we might wish to approach a particular issue.

Profile pieces

Engage with key London/ national journalists that either hold a relevant brief e.g. business, or have previously written extensively on the subject. This would take the form of a 1-2-1 interview with the Cabinet Member or Committee Chair, enabling them to talk extensively about the work of the Council.

Outlets to target: Evening Standard, BBC London, ITV London, BBC Radio London, LBC, West End Extra.

In-depth focus

This will enable the licensing team to demonstrate first-hand the important work that it carries out within Westminster. It will also enable us to offer a unique hook to high-profile target journalists. This could take the form of a late-night tour with the City Inspectors.

Outlets to target: Evening Standard, BBC London, ITV London.

Op-eds

Opinion pieces targeted at the relevant trade media. This would enable the Committee Chair to go into greater detail about the work of the committee and communicate the council's position to licensees.

Outlets to target: Restaurant magazine, Total Licensing Magazine, Bar Business Magazine, Bar Magazine, Pub & Bar Magazine, The Caterer, The Caterer, Licensee & Hotelier, Nightclub & Bar, ALMR (The Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers).

Blogs

A regular series of blogs, either highlighting forthcoming committee activity or providing post-committee information. This would help to promote key areas and present a hook to daily news journalists.

Key outlets to target: The Huffington Post, ALMR.

Social media

Tweet key news/ lines via the council's main @CityWestminster twitter account of relevant committee activity. Post press releases after committee decisions to the council website.



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Key issues

Night-time economy

As mentioned above, the night-time economy has received a considerable degree of national and London-wide media attention in recent months. This is for a combination of reasons: The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan’s review of the night-time economy; his appointments of Amy Lame as the first Night Czar and Philip Kolvin as Chair of the Night Time Commission; and the fallout surrounding Islington Council’s closure (and later reversal) of Fabric nightclub.

Lines to take/ key messages:

- We want to promote sustainable growth whilst protecting residential and other interests which compete for use of the city.
- We want to encourage greater partnership between ourselves, the Police, the industry and residents.
- We want to encourage a change in the composition of Westminster’s night-time economy so that it becomes more diverse and less dominated by alcohol-led premises. We will do this by encouraging premises to include more seating and allow for order food by table service, rather than open bar space which caters for high volume vertical drinking. This is consistent with national policy as set out by the Home Office.
- Our approach is market-led and we do not seek to use licensing to protect certain types of premises from failure as a result of changing consumer demands.

Short-term lets

In an addition to the night-time economy, there is an opportunity to provide on-going communications support about more long-term campaigns, particularly around controversial subjects or areas where the council is taking a leading role. The main opportunities are set out in the calendar below, but in the immediacy one of the current areas of work is around short-terms lets.

The short-term lets industry is one of the Leader’s key City for All priorities going forward and Westminster City Council is currently taking a leading role in working with the Government and Mayor of London to bring about increased collaboration of short-term lets providers and greater enforcement of the 90-night limit.

Calendar

Below is a list of the key event that the licensing team need to be aware of in 2017.

Event	Date
Licensing Act 2003 – House of Lords inquiry	April
State Opening of Parliament	Spring
New ‘City for All Day’	June
Westminster Forum: The future for London's night-time economy	27 th June
Political party conferences	September/ October
Short-term lets campaign	On-going



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Air Quality Strategy	TBC
Open Spaces & Biodiversity Strategy	TBC
Gig & Sharing Economy Charter	TBC
Gambling policy	TBC
New Sustainability Manifesto	TBC
Special inspection report of London Zoo	TBC
Possible Government inquiry into zoo conditions	TBC
New 'Report It' campaign	TBC
'My Westminster' campaign	TBC

Evaluation

In line with our measurable objectives we will produce regular dashboards tracking media output, coverage, enquiries and social media mentions.

On each policy area or major committee decision, we will aim to have at least one mention in national, London and trade press.
