



City of Westminster

Licensing Committee Report

Date:	Wednesday 29 th November 2017
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Title:	Licensing Charter Update
Report of:	Director of Public Protection and Licensing
Wards Affected:	All
Financial Summary:	N/A.
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update for Members of the Committee on the progress on delivering the City for All year 2 commitment to introduce a voluntary standard, now named the Westminster's Licensing Charter.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report. Members will receive further updates on the Licensing Charter's progress at future Licensing Committee hearings.

3. Reasons for Decision

- 3.1 The report has been provided to inform the Licensing Committee of the progress with delivering the Westminster Licensing Charter.

4. Background information, including policy context

- 4.1 Westminster City Council has set out a commitment within year 2 of its City For All vision to "support the entertainment industry to develop a voluntary Westminster Standard which promotes responsible behaviour amongst licensees and sets the standard in terms of caring for the welfare of their patrons and being good neighbours". This standard has been called Westminster's Licensing Charter (the Charter).

- 4.2 The Charter focuses on recognising achievement in good premises, driving forward good practice, through the use of a range of initiatives, within individual premises and across a wider area or district. Protection of the vulnerable from harm is at the core of this work, supporting key licensing objectives.
- 4.3 The Charter also seeks to maximise the benefit of the council, police and industry, working together to develop a proactive, coordinated plan of action to diversify and promote the evening and night time economy within a defined area.
- 4.4 Our Licensing Charter work forms a key element of Westminster's successful Home Office Local Area Alcohol Action (LAAA) bid. It addresses two of the principle aims of the Home Office programme, that is, to prevent alcohol-related crime and disorder and to generate economic growth by creating a vibrant and diverse evening and night time economy.
- 4.5 The LAAA programme sets out five core challenges, and the Charter broadly addresses the second and third challenges in the LAAA programme, highlighted below:
 - 4.5.1 How can local areas improve the collection, sharing and use of data between A&E Departments, local authorities and the police?
 - 4.5.2 How can local authorities, the police and businesses ensure the safe movement of people in the night time economy, including situation where offenders are targeting vulnerable people?
 - 4.5.3 How can local areas expand their use of safe spaces?
 - 4.5.4 How can local authorities, the police and business work together to help prevent the sale of alcohol to drunks in both the off- and on-trades?
 - 4.5.5 How can local authorities, the police and business work together to help design out crime?
- 4.6 Support of our Charter work through the Home office LAAA programme benefits the council and local business with access to expertise in central government, mentoring and learning from other areas involved or previously involved, as well as access to independent initiatives such as Pubwatch, Street Pastors and Purple Flag.
- 4.7 We understand that we may also be able to access new funding streams as a result of being part of the LAAA programme and there is the added benefit of further raising the profile of our work at a national level – the Charter work supports these aims.

- 4.8 The Charter is being piloted in the Heart of London Business Alliance BID (HOLBA) area. HOLBA have committed to the Charter on behalf of their licensed businesses. Our aim is to encourage a programme of further uptake across other distinct areas of the City once the HOLBA pilot has progressed.
- 4.9 The implementation of the Charter is not to focus on finding new ways to enforce against poorly run premises and it will not interfere with the processes used by the Police or the council to deal with serious incidents.

5. Charter objectives and principles

- 5.1 The Licensing Charter is based on four key objectives which are:
 - 5.1.1 Premises are better able to support vulnerable individuals in and around their premises.
 - 5.1.2 Reductions in associated anti-social behaviour, crime and emergency health issues.
 - 5.1.3 Evening and Night Time Economy supported to grow responsibly.
 - 5.1.4 Improved working relationship between council, police and industry and improved perception of the council amongst key operators.
- 5.2 The principles for the Licensing Charter are:
 - 5.2.1 The initiative must be industry-led and voluntary for those that want to take part and yet, contribute to a demonstrable shift in how premises operate in an area.
 - 5.2.2 Focused campaigns and information to inform those visiting licensed premises within Westminster on the risks associated with intoxication and drugs or other priority issues.
 - 5.2.3 Improving the support available for individuals who may be vulnerable as a result of intoxication, drugs or other issues in the evening and night time economy.
 - 5.2.4 Operators have a responsibility to support patrons who may be vulnerable both inside and in the vicinity of their premises and should be recognised for doing so.
 - 5.2.5 Premises should not fear having someone who is too drunk or otherwise vulnerable on the premises, provided the individual is being properly looked after.

6. Operation of the Licensing Charter within the HOLBA pilot area

- 6.1 A Charter steering group will represent local businesses signing up to the Charter, and will also involve representatives from the Council, Police and

other key stakeholders. The steering group will determine the relevant tools and initiatives to achieve the Charter objectives.

- 6.2 There are a number of tools and initiatives available that may assist businesses in achieving the objectives of the Charter. The initiative being initially used is the Best Bar None scheme, adapted for use within Westminster, with a focus on reducing vulnerability. Other initiatives could include use of 'Drinkaware' crews, creation of safe spaces, street pastors, support and information hubs, and coordinated approaches to common/dubious crimes, such as lost/stolen phones, and regular get home safe messages and communication. It will be up to the steering group to decide what best fits with its membership and area.

7. Charter commitments

- 7.1 In delivering the objectives of the Licensing Charter there has to be a commitment from business, BIDs, Council, Police and other stakeholders. As part of the commitment from businesses they will commit to:

7.1.1 Agree to work to achieve the objectives of the Licensing Charter

7.1.2 Support for and participating in initiatives

7.1.3 Share best practices and supporting other businesses within the area who have also signed up to the Charter

7.1.4 Enable the assessment and collection of information to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives undertaken.

- 7.2 The City Council and the Police will commit to:

7.2.1 Draw in and coordinate support from voluntary schemes such as Drinkaware Crew and Street Pastors.

7.2.2 Reform the approach to identifying problem premises and tasking by using a wider range of factors than purely crime data.

7.2.3 Develop an enhanced compliance support offer which enables premises to proactively address issues in partnership with authorities and avoids the need for expensive enforcement action.

7.2.4 Develop new ways to share information about premises to help operators identify and address issues and trends before they become an enforcement problem.

7.2.5 Balanced approach to enforcement which takes into account how premises dealt with a situation such as a highly intoxicated and vulnerable individual as evidence of good practice as opposed to simply identifying the incident as evidence for enforcement. This may result in the reduction of the risk rating of the premises from the

Council and reduce the frequency and/or level of compliance inspection.

- 7.2.6 Work with the industry to trial new approaches to promoting the responsible night time economy e.g. through events which will inform future policy development and support diversification.
- 7.2.7 Police Teams able to respond effectively to incidents in the area and target repeat offenders in premises.
- 7.2.8 Support for place marketing relating to the responsible offer of the West End based on the positive actions taken by supportive premises.

8. Charter Benefits

- 8.1 There are a number of potential benefits to businesses if they sign up to the Charter. These include:
 - 8.1.1 Improved operating standards across all businesses involved and reduction in the risk of incidents occurring.
 - 8.1.2 Sharing of best practice.
 - 8.1.3 Building of good working relationships with police and local authorities.
 - 8.1.4 Reduction in the Council's risk rating and level of compliance inspections.
 - 8.1.5 Support in delivering key initiatives from the Council and key stakeholders.
 - 8.1.6 Ability to seek funding and support for campaigns and initiatives in the area.
 - 8.1.7 Evidence of being a well-run premises with good management in place in the unfortunate event of an incident occurring.
 - 8.1.8 Access to training which is beneficial to patrons in terms of safety, and to the business in terms of more engaged staff.
 - 8.1.9 Increased footfall by creating a safer evening and night time economy and a neighbourhood in which people are more inclined to visit and spend.
 - 8.1.10 Opportunity to responsibly grow and diversify the local evening and night time economy.
 - 8.1.11 Recognition for working to achieve the Licensing Charter objectives through awards or public endorsement.

- 8.2 In addition to the benefits to businesses there are a number of potential benefits to the City Council and the Police. These include:
- 8.2.1 Lowering crime and local disruption through better managed premises which could lead to freeing up of resources for other purposes.
 - 8.2.2 Reduced need for expensive compliance and enforcement action.
 - 8.2.3 Recognising area of the City as best practice and national leaders in supporting safe, well managed evening and night time economies.
 - 8.2.4 Learn lessons on future options for policy development and service delivery.
 - 8.2.5 Support for local growth and diversification of the evening and night time economy.

9. Current position and next steps

- 9.1 The Charter is being piloted in the Heart of London Business Alliance BID (HOLBA) and an adapted version of the Best Bar None scheme has been chosen as the first initiative to work towards Charter objectives and status.
- 9.2 The Westminster version of Best Bar None has been developed with stakeholders and business. A key focus is to protect the vulnerable, and ensure safety and security within the evening and night time economy.
- 9.3 HOLBA launched its Best Bar None on the 30th October in Tiger Tiger. The Leader was present to launch the event and provide a speech on her commitment to the Licensing Charter and that the Council will support HOLBA in delivering the charter objectives. This is the first in a number of initiatives that will be implemented within the HOLBA area, as part of their commitment to the Licensing Charter. The Council is supporting HOLBA with the Licensing Charter through their steering group.
- 9.4 The Council has committed to work with HOLBA to sign up 15 businesses to the Licensing Charter by the end of this financial year. Work has already begun on engagement with businesses relating to the charter within the pilot area.
- 9.5 The Council will seek to continue the development of the Licensing Charter approach within the HOLBA area, promoting initiatives that may achieve the Charters overall objectives. The Council will look for additional areas to grow this approach for the future. There has already been interest in the Licensing Charter from a number of organisations and Northbank BID.
- 9.6 Communications and information about the Charter will be coordinated through the Charter steering group.

- 9.7 The Licensing Service have developed a webpage on the council website which outlines the scope of the Charter work, building a platform of best practice and signposting to initiatives available to any area or group of businesses considering the Charter mark. The webpage address is www.westminster.gov.uk/licensing-charter.
- 9.8 We are adapting our inspection and enforcement approach to enable our officers to promote the Charter, encouraging best practice to achieve compliance, and freeing up officers to target problematic businesses that may have little regard to the safety of their patrons or the negative impacts of their business model.
- 9.9 As part of the wider Charter work and the work we are doing on the Home Officer LAAA initiative the Council are developing a partnership with Drinkaware. As part of this partnership, to promote the Charter and to put out information to remind people of the impact of alcohol may cause, especially in the festive season we will be running a social media campaign through to the first week in January 2018. The campaign is called "Stay with your pack" which is specifically about reminding people that leaving a friend or colleague who is drunk and vulnerable may lead to loss of property, personal injury of being a victim of crime. The Council has set up a webpage (www.westminster.gov.uk/drinkaware) to provide further information on the issues that the campaign is covering and also where to get further support relating to alcohol and drug misuse. We are working with colleagues in our Public Health department relating to this campaign and the links with additional support services.

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact:

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Background Papers

Westminster Licensing Charter

Licensing Charter briefing note produced by Annette Acik, Licensing Service Manager dated 25th October 2017

City for All year 2