

Report from the Chair of Licensing

Since the last Licensing update report, the Licensing Committee have met where Members considered issues arising from coronavirus restrictions and approved a temporary adjustment to the process of taxi driver applications affecting medicals, knowledge tests and safeguarding training. The decision enables applications to continue to be processed whilst protecting public safety by reducing the term of the licence issued.

Following on from matters that were raised at the last Full Council in relation to the absence of face coverings by passengers and drivers, officers have reinforced requirements with the trade. Face covering signage for taxis is on order, and each vehicle will shortly be required to display 2 signs indicating 'face coverings must be worn'. This will be rolled out as part of an initiative to improve compliance and reduce the risk of transmission within taxis.

The Council's Licensing Team continues to work in partnership with other agencies, where necessary, to take fair but firm action, against those across the town's licensing trade that do not adhere to the requirements of the Governments Regulations or their Licensing Conditions. As the borough has been subject to Tier 3 and national restrictions since last Full Council, the business activities of pubs, bars and restaurants has been significantly curtailed. There has been strong and positive engagement and compliance from the majority of the town's licensed premises with the Tier 3 requirements for substantial meals to be served with alcohol. With just a couple of exceptions the Tier 3 and national restriction closures were adhered to. Where breaches have been identified, robust action has been taken. The work of the licensing team has been supported by the deployment of Covid Business Support officers who are now operational in the town.

Some licensed premises have taken advantage of national relaxations in planning rules and introduced takeaway sales of food and alcohol. Away from alcohol licenced premises, new applications have increased for other business licence types, including street trading and animal welfare licences, which indicates signs of some diversification as the pandemic has continued.