

**LICENSING ACT 2003 COMMITTEE  
8 September 2020**

**ITEM NO. ....**

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**UPDATE RELATING TO LICENSING ACT POLICY REVIEW**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Jonathan Dulston  
Stronger Communities Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members with the current position of the Licensing Act Policy Review due in January 2021 in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Summary**

2. The Licensing Act 2005 requires that its Statement of Licensing Policy is reviewed every five years and Darlington Borough Council's policy is scheduled to be renewed in January 2021. Work had commenced on this review early in the year, however the Covid-19 regulations have had an enormous impact on the hospitality trade, particularly those with premises licences and many have been compelled to close. Recent partial relaxation of the Covid-19 Regulations has seen the dynamics of drinking alcohol change considerably, which may have an impact for many years to come.
3. At a recent meeting of the North East Strategic Licensing Group (NESLG), concerns were expressed that due to the closure of many licensed premises and the fact it will take many months to establish business anywhere close to what had been experienced before the Covid-19 lockdown, it will be impossible to adequately consult with an industry that has been deeply damaged and may never recover to the level it used to operate.
4. With these concerns expressed, clarity was sought by the Local Government Association (LGA) with the Home Office, whether the scheduled Licensing Act Policy Reviews could be delayed to such a time that adequate consultation could take place with the hospitality industry for new policies to be developed. Under the current circumstances this is considered acceptable by the LGA, provided work is progressed once some level of normality has returned.
5. It is proposed that a decision is made to maintain Darlington's current Licensing Act Policy until the implementation of a revised policy in April 2021. This will afford the Licensing Authority an opportunity for meaningful consultations with the hospitality

industry as it gradually regains some degree of normality, whilst being aware that there may be further local 'lockdown' requirements. Other Responsible Authorities and stakeholders who would normally be heavily involved in the consultation process are also in a similar position where they are currently not able to provide a full service for the consultation.

## **Recommendations**

6. It is recommended that :-

The Licensing Committee retain the current Licensing Act Policy until April 2021 to allow sufficient consultation time with the hospitality trade and stakeholders once Covid-19 Regulations have been sufficiently relaxed.

## **Reasons**

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reason:-

To provide a pragmatic and fair approach to all those working within the alcohol arena, which is in a current state of transition, to ensure a full, meaningful consultation process takes place for the public to continue to be safe within the Borough of Darlington.

**Ian Williams**  
**Director of Economic Growth**