

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 23 February 2021

PRESENT – Councillors B Jones (Chair), Clarke, Crumbie, Donoghue, Dulston, Haszeldine, C L B Hughes, Lee, K Nicholson and Snedker

APOLOGIES – Councillor Newall

ABSENT – Councillor A J Scott

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Allison Hill (Democratic Officer), Graham Hall (Head of Community Safety), Colin Dobson (Licensing Manager), Paula Park (Licensing Enforcement Officer), Bethany Symonds (Lawyer) and Pc Iain Robertson (Durham Constabulary)

LG16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

LG17 MINUTES

Submitted – the Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the General Licensing Committee held on 12 January 2021.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Licensing committee held on 12 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

LG18 REVIEW OF LICENCES FOR APPROVED VENUES FOR MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

The Assistant Director Law and Governance and Proper Officer for Darlington Registration District submitted a report (previously circulated) to review the licensing arrangements for venues approved for marriages and civil Partnerships in Darlington giving consideration to the impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic; and to review the arrangements for marriages and civil partnerships in the Town Hall, Darlington.

The submitted report gave the background to the current legislation which provides the legal framework for marriages and civil partnerships and the responsibility of the local authority for the licensing of all other venues for marriages and civil partnerships; and outlined the implications of the current Covid-19 pandemic upon marriages and civil partnerships and for those suppliers and hospitality venues connected with weddings.

It was reported that since March 2020 some marriages and civil partnerships had proceeded however approximately 400 weddings at the register office and at the approved venues had either been cancelled or had to be rescheduled which has had a financial impact on the couples being married, lost revenue for the local authority and the approved venues, most of which are hotels which had been significantly hit by the current Covid-19 pandemic.

The General Register Office had suggested that local authorities give consideration to how it can utilise its licensing arrangements for approved venues to support them during this difficult time and possible options were contained in the submitted report.

It was also reported that ceremonies had continued throughout the pandemic in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall and the Statutory Marriage room had been relocated to Committee Room 4 to meet social distancing requirements for the couple being married, two witnesses and two registrars. The submitted report outlined potential options to maximise locations for weddings in the event of the Council Chamber or Council Chamber Foyer not being available and a number of alternative areas were proposed to be licensed for marriages and civil partnerships.

Members entered into discussion on the submitted report and had a number of questions that were unable to be answered at that time so proposed that the decision on this matter be deferred.

RESOLVED – That further consideration of this matter be adjourned to a future meeting.