

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO LICENSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 31 AUGUST 2010
 title: FUTURE OF THE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING WITH LICENCE
 HOLDERS
 submitted by: LEGAL SERVICES MANAGER
 principal author: DIANE RICE

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To request Committee's instructions about whether or not to continue to hold an Annual Public Meeting.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Ambitions - } • Community Objectives - } • Corporate Priorities - } • Other Considerations - } | <p>The council seeks to be a well managed Council, consultation with licence holders via the Annual Public Meeting has provided an opportunity to improve how the Council delivers licensing services.</p> |
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2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council has held an Annual Meeting with licence holders for several years. Attached as Appendix 1 are the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2010.

2.2 The meeting was intended to serve several purposes, namely:

- to inform licence holders about changes to the licensing practice;
- to raise matters arising for example via members of the public consulting the Council;
- to consult licence holders about any changes proposed or problems that have arisen with the licensing system;
- to provide licence holders with an opportunity to raise matters of concern directly with the Committee and to allow members of the public or other authorities with specific issues to discuss these with licence holders and Committee Members.

2.3 During the 2009/10 municipal year, the Council had its Annual Public Meeting and approximately 20 licence holders attended.

2.4 The meeting held this year (2010/11) on the 15 June 2010 was well attended by Members, representatives from the Police, Highway Authority and Local Disability Forum, but only one licence holder attended.

- 2.5 No explanation has been given for this, by licence holders, the publicity for the meeting was the same as in previous years. A representative of the Hackney Carriage Association has indicated that his members did not attend because there is a perception that the meetings are 'one way' ie the Council does not listen.
- 2.6 The Council is not proposing to make any changes to its current practice in licensing, and that the system post transfer to this Committee in 2006, has now become established, there were therefore no significant changes that affected licence holders. This may have influenced attendance figures.
- 2.7 Because of the low attendance at the meeting, Committee may wish to consider whether to continue to hold an annual public meeting.
- 2.8 Since the original meeting was put in place, other opportunities have arisen to consult more widely with licence holders in that the Council's website is now more simply designed, and, as Members will be aware, members of the public and licence holders in particular, have become used to attending 'ordinary' Licensing Committee meetings to take part in the public participation sessions.
- 2.9 The Council has recently extended its arrangements for petitions which encourages public participation in Council business, providing there is a significant number of individuals that are interested. This system could be used by licence holders, or a similar system adapted with a different threshold eg licence holders only, and threshold of say 25 licence holders.
- 2.10 Committee may therefore wish to consider whether to hold an annual public meeting automatically or only if they receive a request from a certain number of licence holders.
- 2.11 This would give licence holders an opportunity to request a meeting if a significant issue arose affecting all licence holders, whilst preventing unnecessary use of resources to arrange a meeting which is poorly attended.

3 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 3.1 Cease holding an Annual Public Meeting with licence holders.
- 3.2 Encourage licence holders to take advantage of the existing opportunity for public participation at each meeting of the Licensing Committee.
- 3.3 Agree to hold an Annual Public Meeting, no more than one in any municipal year, and if a request is received from at least 20 licence holders.

LEGAL SERVICES MANAGER

For further information please ask for Diane Rice, extension 4418.