

**LICENSING COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Date: Monday, 16 August 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

**Present:** Councillors: Maureen McKay (Chair), Loraine Rossati (Vice Chair), Adrian Brown, Lizzy Kelly, Margaret Notley, Claire Parris and Graham Snell

**Start / End** Start Time: 6.00pm

**Time:** End Time: 8.40pm

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Doug Bainbridge, Rob Broom, Jody Hanafin, Liz Harrington, Graham Lawrence, Andy McGuinness and Lin Martin-Haugh.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Councillor Loraine Rossati be elected Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee for the Municipal year 2021/22.

**3 LICENSING APPLICATIONS - PROCEDURE**

The procedure for the Hearing of Licensing Applications was noted.

**4 APPLICATION FOR A NEW PREMISES LICENCE - CITY TREE LTD, STATION SHOP, UNIT 1 LYTTON WAY, STEVENAGE**

The Chair welcomed all parties to the meeting and all those present introduced themselves. All parties present confirmed they had received a copy of the procedure note for the meeting.

The Licensing Officer, Stevenage Borough Council advised that the issue for consideration by the Committee was an application for a new Premises Licence for City Tree Ltd, Station Shop, Unit 1 Lytton Way. He advised that the British Transport Police and Hertfordshire Police had made representations objecting to the application.

The application was for the sale of alcohol off the premises from 08:00 to 23:00 Monday to Saturday inclusive and 10:00am to 22:30pm on Sunday.

The Chair thanked the Licensing Officer and invited representations from the Objectors to the Licence.

Police Inspector Kevin Buck from the British Transport Police and Sergeant Chris Adshead from the Community Safety Unit of Hertfordshire Police addressed the Committee and explained the reasons for their objection to the new Licence.

The Police representatives stressed that they were not objecting to the premises or to the applicant as a business owner but purely to the sale of alcohol at the premises. Their objections related to the high number of incidents, particularly suicides and attempted suicides at the railway station and the impact on all those involved including station staff as well as the general public.

The Committee was also advised of the rise in anti-social behaviour issues including aggressive begging at the station which in the opinion of the Police would potentially be exacerbated by the sale of alcohol at the station and in their view, the availability of alcohol in such proximity to the railway would increase the risk to vulnerable people and fuel any alcohol addiction.

The Chair thanked both Officers and invited Mr Bhatt, the Applicant to address the Committee.

Mr Bhatt informed the Committee of his experience and record of running a successful Stevenage Town Centre business. He spoke about his willingness to work with the Authorities to try to alleviate the concerns of the Police. The Committee were also advised that Mr Bhatt had proposed to train his staff members who would be working at the premises, in mental health awareness as well as agreeing to limit the range and reduce the hours of sale of alcohol and also to ensure alcohol was kept behind the counter.

After each party had been given the opportunity to sum up their case, the Chair asked the applicant, objectors and Licensing Officers to leave the meeting whilst the Committee considered the evidence presented.

During their deliberations, Members questioned the access to the station platform and the views of both Network Rail and the Train Operator. In the hearing mention was made of the sale of alcohol at Hitchin Railway Station. However this was viewed as very different to Stevenage and not relevant to this application.

The option of a short term licence as a trial was considered but not thought appropriate. The same issues would still arise.

Following due consideration, all parties were invited back into the meeting.

The Committee having considered the matter carefully and taking into account all the relevant factors, **RESOLVED** that the application be refused on the basis of Public Safety and the evidence provided at the hearing from the British Transport Police, Hertfordshire Constabulary and the Applicant, in conjunction with the Council's Licensing Policy and stated Licensing Objectives.

The Applicant was advised of his right of appeal to the Magistrates' Court against the above decision within 21 days of the date of the decision (16 August 2021).

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**