

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

4th March 2019

PUBLIC SPEAKING AT MEETINGS OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Gareth Prosser, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The report outlines the background to the Council's recent decision to introduce public speaking arrangements for a number of Committees and invites the Members to consider which public speaking arrangements to put in place for the Licensing Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** on the following arrangements for public speaking at Licensing Committee meetings:

- 1) to require members of the public to register in advance of a meeting, (*with the length of time in advance to be determined by the Committee*) in order to speak at the Licensing Committee;**
- 2) to set a limit of three or five minutes for each member of the public to speak at Licensing Committee;**
- 3) to set a limit of a maximum of 15 minutes to be dedicated to public speaking at the start of the meeting; and**
- 4) to specify any other arrangements considered necessary to enable public speaking at meetings of the Licensing Committee.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 At a meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP) on 12th February 2019 Members considered a complaint with regard to the potential for the public to speak at public Committee meetings. Some Committees, including Council, the Executive Committee and Planning Committee, already have arrangements in place which permit Members of the public to speak at

Committee meetings, subject to providing appropriate notice in accordance with the Council's constitutional requirements. However, public speaking arrangements are not formalised for some other Committees which meet in the public arena, including the Licensing Committee. At these meetings the public can only speak at the discretion of the Chair. The complaint called for residents to be provided with an opportunity to speak at all public Committee meetings.

- 3.2 The CRWP noted that at other local authorities the public are sometimes provided with an opportunity to speak at Committee meetings held in the public. Often a public speaking item will be included early on the agenda and residents can speak at Committee meetings during this item, subject to providing sufficient notice to the Council. Members agreed that a similar arrangement should be introduced at Redditch Borough Council for all Committees which held meetings that were open to the public and which did not already have arrangements in place that would enable the public to speak at those meetings.
- 3.3 To ensure consistency with arrangements already in place for the Planning Committee, the most similar Committee to the Licensing Committee, Members suggested that each resident should register to speak and should be provided with a maximum of three minutes to speak at the Committee meeting.

Registration and Public Speaking Content

- 3.4 The Council requires members of the public to register in order to speak at Committee meetings where public speaking arrangements have been in place for some time. For Planning Committee meetings residents are asked to register to speak on a particular item by 12 noon on the day of the Committee meeting.
- 3.5 Officers have reviewed public speaking arrangements for Licensing Committees in other parts of Worcestershire. Public speaking is currently only permitted at Worcester City Council where residents are required to register at 4.30pm the day before the meeting. The resident must indicate the nature and content of their participation.
- 3.6 In Redditch public speaking could entail residents addressing the Committee regarding their views in respect of a particular item on the agenda. Should this occur Members may wish to agree a short notice period for the registration, potentially similar to that for the Planning Committee.

Speaking Time Limits

- 3.7 At the Planning Committee residents are permitted to speak for three minutes on an application and where there are a group of supporters or objectors they are allowed no more than 10 minutes in which to address the Committee.
- 3.8 At Worcester City Council each member of the public can speak for five minutes at meetings of the Licensing Committee and a maximum of 15 minutes is allocated to public speaking at every meeting.

- 3.9 Officers would suggest that, to ensure consistency across the Council for public speaking arrangements, Members should consider introducing time limits for the Licensing Committee that are similar to those that are already in place for the Planning Committee.
- 3.10 To avoid disrupting the flow of the meeting, officers would recommend that the public speaking item be placed on the agenda at the start of the meeting before discussion of the individual reports. As with public speaking at Council, Members would not enter into any discussion with the speaker about their comments at the time, but would be able to refer to them in the course of consideration of the relevant item.

Financial Implications

- 3.11 No specific financial implications have been identified.

Legal Implications

- 3.12 No specific legal implications have been identified.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.13 Members are asked to note that the CRWP did not propose to introduce public speaking arrangements at private meetings. Therefore the information detailed in this report would not result in changes to proceedings at Licensing Sub-Committee meetings.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14 The introduction of public speaking arrangements at meetings of the Licensing Committee will enable the public to engage more effectively with the local democratic process.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

No specific risks have been identified.

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