



Minutes: Local Licensing Forum Conveners meeting

Date: Wednesday 14th Jul 2010

Time: 2 – 3.45pm

Location: Alcohol Focus Scotland offices, Glasgow

Purpose: To consider the general issue of how Licensing Forums are doing and whether Forums feel that there is any further support that Alcohol Focus Scotland could be offering.

Chair:

Dr Evelyn Gillan Chief Executive, Alcohol Focus Scotland

Minute Taker:

Linda Bowie Licensing and ServeWise Manager, Alcohol Focus Scotland

Present:

David Sands Fife Local Licensing Forum
 Eric Box Argyll & Bute Local Licensing Forum
 Norma Thomson North Aberdeenshire Local Licensing Forum
 Allan Mackintosh Aberdeen City Local Licensing Forum

Apologies:

John Govan Dumfries & Galloway Local Licensing Forum
 John Kinsella South Aberdeenshire Local Licensing Forum
 Paul MacLennan Central Aberdeenshire Local Licensing Forum

Attachments:

None

	Action
1. Welcome	
2. General performance of Local Licensing Forums	
a) Membership of the Forums and communication with the public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity for the Forums varies across Councils. Discussed whether it would be helpful to have examples of work completed by Forums to use in publicity as it's difficult to explain the advisory role of the Forum to the public. • Difficult to get people interested in the Forum. Examples discussed of inviting Community Councils, press, etc • Membership of Forums varies. There was some discussion about who should appoint members of the Forums and the possible issues if the decision is left solely to the Forum or the Council. 	
b) Support for Forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forums generally operate individually and there may be a benefit in meeting other Forums and sharing issues and good practice. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Forums have a legal adviser – in some instances this is the same person as clerks the Licensing Board. There was some discussion of the benefits and disadvantages of this, and the possible conflict of interest. <p>c) Forums and Boards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberdeen City now meet with the Licensing Board twice per year: one meeting chaired by the Board and one meeting chaired by the Forum. • Convener of Fife Forum has a one-to-one meeting with the Convener of the Board quarterly to discuss licensing issues. • Legal question over whether the Forum can meet with, or comment on, other Committees within the Council which link to licensing, such as late night catering or transport. <p>d) Work of the Forums and Boards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common question is, 'What does the Forum do?' There appears to be differing views and understanding of the role of Forums. It was suggested that some agencies don't always have a clear view of what they're trying to achieve or of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005. • Suggested that Forums annually review their achievements and effectiveness, for example, the list of recommendations they have made to the Licensing Board. <p>e) Communication between Alcohol Focus Scotland and Forums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's an on-going difficulty for Alcohol Focus Scotland to get equal communication with all Forums. Some are more willing to engage than others. • Linda Bowie receives minutes from approximately half of Licensing Forums. These are read and good practice points collated – where possible good practice is added to the website www.local-licensing-forums.org.uk • Forums website generally found to be useful. 	
<p>3. Suggestions for further support to Forums</p> <p>a) Communication between Forums and Alcohol Focus Scotland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested that Alcohol Focus Scotland could add an item to the agenda of each Local Licensing Forum with responses to be reported back to Alcohol Focus Scotland <p>b) Communication between Forums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested that Alcohol Focus Scotland include a meeting of Forums within the programme of the National Licensing Conference in September. For example, this could include asking Forums to bring a brief resume of the work they've undertaken so far and a list of the recommendations they have made to the Board • Conveners were asked to consider the benefits of regional or national meetings of Forums and how these could be best implemented. 	<p>AFS Conveners</p>
<p>4. Suggestions for further work in wider licensing context</p> <p>a) Strengthening role of Forums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Ministerial statement on the importance of Local Licensing Forums would help to raise the status of Forums, particularly with other stakeholders who currently show some resistance. 	<p>AFS</p>
<p>b) Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were different opinions on the benefits of the Forum having its own budget 	

	Action
<p>c) Statistics and evidence gathering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested that guidance on how to gather evidence would be helpful. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – List what statistics would be relevant to each of the 5 objectives – List the relevant Scottish statistics – Direct Forums to where they can source these statistics for their local area – Note that local statistics should be shown in relation to trends – for example, how the local statistics compare to the national average; how statistics for each ward or area compares to the average for the Council area; how statistics for an area have changed over time (trends) • It is noted that much of the Guidance seems to be concerned with on-licence. As alcohol-related harm is directly linked to per capita consumption, there is a need to consider the volume of alcohol sold, particularly by the big supermarkets, when collating evidence. • The Guidance states there has to be a 'causal link' shown between premises and problems - Alcohol Focus Scotland will raise this with the Government. • There is an issue about who should collate the evidence given the limited resources available to Forums. <p>d) Licensing Standards Officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted that LSOs are required to do a lot of administration and compliance visits which can impact on the amount of time left for the advice and guidance parts of their roles. This is of particular concern where there are low numbers of LSOs. Geography of the Council area as well as the number of licensed premises will impact on the number of LSOs required. <p>e) Fees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed that current system of fees is unfair and large premises with large off-sales facilities, such as supermarkets, pay proportionally less. It was suggested that licensing fees could be linked to volume of alcohol sold. It may be more appropriate to progress the issues through the provision of the social responsibility fee. 	
<p>5. Any other business</p> <p>a) Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda will phone each of the Conveners to collate the specific information about engagement with young people on behalf of the Scottish Government. Any additional comments or ideas from today's meetings will be welcomed. 	<p>LB/ Conveners</p>