

SCRUTINY COUNCIL INITIATIVE: FINAL REPORT

## 1. SUMMARY

1.1 In November 2005 DCMS invited a small, representative, group of 10 licensing authorities to help us monitor and evaluate the new licensing regime as licensing 'Scrutiny Councils'. The 10 councils participating in the initiative were: Manchester, Taunton Deane, Blackpool, Cardiff, Birmingham, Newcastle, Nottingham, Brighton and Hove, Bristol and Havering.

1.2 The Scrutiny Council initiative was formally launched by James Purnell, then Minister for Licensing, on 25 November 2005 and ended in June 2006. During this time, DCMS officials visited each Council on a regular basis to collect information and data about the practical implementation of the Act and also organised two further plenary meetings and a round of regional meetings in May.

1.3 The initiative was successful on all levels providing:

- a good example of successful partnership working between central and local government;
- an insight into how the national policy framework has been translated into local licensing policies;
- practical experience of how the licensing regime is being implemented in a range of local authorities;
- examples of good practice and innovation, including some excellent partnership working between SCs, their responsible authorities and interested parties;
- quantitative data and qualitative case study material to inform Ministers and the wider Government strategy on the prevention of alcohol abuse;
- evidence to support the initial and medium term review of the statutory Guidance, leading to proposals for clarification, addition and changes;
- evidence to inform the DCLG's 'How to' programme on Managing Town Centres;
- evidence to inform the independent Fees Review Panel.

1.4 This final report will be published on the DCMS website and DCMS Ministers will consider all the issues raised by Scrutiny Councils.

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In September 2005, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and Sir Sandy Bruce Lockhart, Chair of the Local Government Association, agreed to work together to identify a small, balanced group of ten 'Scrutiny Councils' who would help us to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the new licensing regime once it came into force on 24 November.

2.2 The ten licensing authorities who agreed to participate in the initiative were: Birmingham, Blackpool, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, Cardiff, Havering (a London borough), Manchester, Nottingham, Newcastle and Taunton Deane (a rural authority).

2.3 The Scrutiny Council initiative was formally launched at a plenary meeting in London on 25 November 2005 by James Purnell, then Minister for Licensing, and concluded on 20 June with a final plenary meeting of all SC representatives and other partners.

### **3. SC OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS**

3.1 The overall objective of the initiative was to establish an in-depth and fruitful partnership between the ten SCs and central policy makers and, within this framework, to:

- understand the interaction of the national policy framework with local licensing policy statements and objectives;
- link local council officers and committee members – and through them the local police, residents, businesses and other stakeholder groups – with central policy makers to draw on practical experience of how the regime is working;
- identify good practice and innovative thinking in the SCs;
- consider issues raised during transition and other matters as they arose; and
- capture and share quantitative licensing statistics and qualitative case study material.

3.2 The key outputs of the initiative were to produce:

- real time indicators of how the new regime was operating;
- evidence to support the initial and full review of the statutory Guidance, leading to proposals for clarification, addition and changes.
- evidence to inform the DCLG's 'How to' programme on Managing Town Centres.

3.3 The SC initiative was also expected to provide useful insights and information to feed into Sir Les Elton's independent Fees Review Panel and the wider programme of evaluation of the licensing changes against stated policy aims and objectives.

### **4. KEY PARTNERS**

4.1 The other key partners in the SC initiative were:

- The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

- The Home Office
- The Local Government Association
- The Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS)

## 5. RESOURCES

5.1 Each council nominated two lead representatives prepared to commit 8-12 working days each over the period of the initiative. DCMS nominated one senior policy lead and a support official to each Council.

5.2 It was agreed that, at least in the initial stages, we would hold one meeting per month with each Council, the majority of which would be held in the local authority. We also agreed to hold two further plenary meetings, one at the mid point of the initiative and a last meeting to agree the final report.

## 6. FUNDING

6.1 DCLG allocated £12,000 to each SC to fund their resource commitment and contribution to the 'How to' programme on Managing Town Centres'.

## 7. REPORTING

7.1 DCMS published two reports on the SC initiative on the DCMS website. The first report, published in March 2006, summed up the outcomes of the initial round of meetings with SCs and a further brief progress report was published in April.

## 8. SCRUTINY COUNCIL MEETINGS

### Initial meetings

8.1 DCMS held a round of initial meetings with lead representatives from each SC between December 2005 and March 2006. We also took the opportunity to meet a wide range of local stakeholders including responsible authorities, residents groups, licensing solicitors, councillors and, in one instance, the local Member of Parliament.

8.2 In some local authorities, such as Newcastle and Brighton and Hove, DCMS officials accompanied police and licensing enforcement officers on night duty to experience at first hand how the licensing laws were being enforced and to see how licensees were responding to their new responsibilities.

8.3 We also attended licensing forums, where these existed, to see how the licensing authority and responsible authorities were working in partnership with local business, residents and other stakeholders to deliver the licensing objectives.

8.4 In Birmingham, for instance, we attended the authority's well-established licensing forum that includes trade representatives, licensing solicitors and responsible authorities. The forum meets monthly to discuss issues around licensing, including enforcement, to share any problems and develop joint solutions. The

Forum has proved invaluable in helping the licensing authority to develop a really effective partnership approach.

8.5 Similarly, in Newcastle, the licensing authority brought together the local MP, councillors, representatives of local residents' associations and licensing solicitors to give us their perspectives on the licensing process. And in Blackpool, we attended the first meeting of the Licensing Consultative Panel which comprises responsible authorities, trade representatives and other groups affected by licensing, such as taxi drivers. This panel will be used to consult on a possible cumulative impact policy for the town centre.

8.6 In some SCs, we were also given the chance to hear the views of other licensing authorities in the region. In Nottingham, for instance, we attended a meeting of the Nottinghamshire County Licensing Group which brings together the 8 licensing authorities in the County on a monthly basis to discuss common licensing issues.

8.7 These initial meetings were vital in enabling us to build up a clear picture of how the licensing laws were being implemented in the authority, discuss any particular issues arising and identify examples of good practice and partnership working.

### Regional meetings

8.8 Following the mid initiative plenary meeting on 16 March, we held a round of regional meetings in May to give SCs the opportunity to exchange views and experiences with colleagues in their region.

8.9 The three regional meetings were hosted by Havering (with Brighton and Hove, Nottingham and Birmingham), Bristol (with Taunton Deane and Cardiff) and Blackpool (with Manchester and Newcastle). The host Councils chaired the meetings and produced summaries of discussions for consideration by all ten SCs.

## **9. DATA**

9.1 We asked each SC to provide quantitative data on a monthly basis including information such as number of premises licences issued, number of hearings held, etc. This information is summarised in the table at Annex 1. At the same time, we also asked SCs to provide us with qualitative information on how the new regime was bedding down in their areas.

9.2 The data provided by SCs has proved extremely useful in informing Ministers and the wider Government agenda via the cross-Whitehall Alcohol Strategy Group.

## **10. TRANSITION**

10.1 At the start of the initiative, SCs were just emerging from the transition process. They had been under tremendous pressure to get applications processed and licences issued. This had been particularly stressful for all concerned because the majority of applications were submitted very near to the 6<sup>th</sup> August deadline.

10.2 Nearly all SCs took on temporary staff to help with the application process and some had been retained after 24 November to help clear the backlog, including the issuing of licences. In some cases, SCs held all day, back- to- back hearings to try to clear outstanding applications. They have since made good progress, despite having

to deal with an increasing flow of new applications, reviews and more recently appeals. Licences have been granted and holding letters sent where necessary and local licensing and police officers are working closely to ensure an appropriate approach where licenses have not yet been issued. SCs are hopeful that any outstanding licences will be issued by the end of the summer.

10.3 The licensing process represented a steep learning curve for all concerned. Most SCs tried to facilitate the process by running training sessions for councillors and responsible authorities, publishing information on their websites to assist applicants and residents and, in some cases, establishing a licensing forum to bring together all the responsible authorities.

10.4 Transition was a useful opportunity for SCs to improve their records and to identify premises which had previously been trading illegally or outside the limits of their existing licences. They also made extensive efforts to communicate with local trade using council websites, letters and visits to premises, workshops and the local media to encourage applications. As a result some received up to 99% of anticipated premises licences by the 6<sup>th</sup> August deadline.

10.5 Some SCs found that the licensing process helped to turn around premises with a long history of disorder, alcohol related violence, etc. In Cardiff, for instance, the police had applied for revocation of the licence of a High Volume Vertical Drinking premises with a history of problems including violence inside and outside the premises, bouncers assaulting customers, etc. However, the prospect of applying for a licence under the new Act encouraged the licensee to work with the police on a new action plan to improve the premises. Measures included: new seating, reduced capacity, extra CCTV, changes to queuing system, an over 21 admission policy, different music, a bottle ban from 7pm, and changes to management and door staff. As a result, the premises were turned around and the application to convert was successful.

10.6 Similarly, in Manchester, police took a firm stance when a premises with a long history of crime and disorder applied for conversion. In response, the licensee introduced a number of measures including better management practices and new door staff. As a result the premises improved considerably and has now dropped out of Manchester's list of 'top ten worst offenders'.

10.7 Councils also took advantage of new powers to address problems around off sales which can become flashpoints for late night violence and disorder. In Blackpool town centre, for instance, takeaways with licences to operate in the early hours have had conditions attached which require them to have door supervisors and, in some cases, to have CCTV fitted. This would not have been possible previously because takeaways outside London only became licensable when the 2003 Act came into force. The introduction of door supervisors at these premises is having a beneficial effect on the town centre.

## **11. EMERGING BENEFITS OF THE LICENSING REGIME**

11.1 In the initial report, we identified some early benefits of the new licensing regime, including:

- better engagement of residents in the licensing process;
- good use of mediation to avoid hearings where possible;

- evidence that the new licensing regime was helping to turn around premises with a long history of disorder, alcohol-related violence, etc; and
- improved partnership working between licensing authorities, responsible authorities, local trade and residents.

11.2 The information we have gathered since then provides a good degree of confidence that these early benefits will continue long term.

### Engagement of residents

11.3 In the first few months of the initiative, SCs noted that licensing reform was having a positive impact on the engagement of residents in the licensing process. Local people were starting to show a much greater understanding of their rights to make representations and in some areas, new community groups had been set up on the back of issues raised around licensing.

11.4 This trend has continued as residents have become more aware and engaged in the licensing process and local papers have publicised successful action by local groups, e.g. to reject longer hours at problem premises. Representations from residents have resulted in new conditions being placed on thousands of licences and longer hours have been rejected where this would undermine the licensing objectives.

11.5 All SCs took active steps to increase resident engagement including publishing details of applications on their websites, inviting residents to participate in licensing forums, etc. Brighton, for example, has a Licensing Strategy Group which includes representatives from residents associations in the area. The Group covers a range of issues including public order, safety and nuisance and aims to create and strengthen partnerships between stakeholders and the licensing authority.

11.6 Councillors have also played a key part in keeping residents informed about licensing applications in their areas and encouraging them to play a part in the licensing process.

### Mediation

11.7 SCs have sought to resolve issues through mediation where possible and in many cases have been able to avoid going to a hearing. In the early months of the initiative, some found that they did not always have time for successful mediation, but this was almost certainly due to the scale of applications received during transition and the situation is now improving.

### Enforcement and Partnership working

11.8 We found early evidence that in some areas the prospect of applying for a new licence under the new Act was helping to turn round problem premises. Further into the new regime, SCs are successfully using a range of approaches based around the new licensing laws and better partnership working to address disorder and alcohol related violence. Typically, these include:

- new conditions on licences, for example, to reduce capacity, introduce bottle bans, etc;

- joint, targeted enforcement initiatives with the police and environmental health officers;
- encouraging businesses to sign up to trade initiatives such as 'Pubwatch' and Best Bar None;
- better transport links, including special night buses and taxi marshals to ensure that crowds are dispersed quickly;
- test purchasing with local weights and measures inspectors;
- pager schemes for door staff to communicate with security guards in other premises.

11.9 In some areas, such as the Broad Street area of Birmingham, good partnership working and the introduction of a cumulative impact policy combined with many of the measures listed above, has delivered real results. Broad Street was traditionally a 'no go' area for people aged over 24, but as a result of the council's licensing strategy, is now attracting older people with a consequent reduction of 53% in reported violent crime during December 05 compared with the same period in the previous year. Some of the licensed premises that previously attracted under age drinkers etc. have converted to cafes and restaurants and the Broad Street Pubwatch scheme has been re-launched as 'Leisurewatch' to reflect the more diverse night time economy.

#### Closure powers and reviews

11.10 As the new regime beds down, SCs, working with the police, are starting to make good use of the new closure and review powers under the Act to deal with problem premises. For instance, a licensed premises in Cardiff was closed recently under the new laws. It had previously been closed for three months following incidents inside and outside, large amounts of cocaine and cannabis were found on the premises during a police raid and the police claimed it was a constant source of nuisance for residents. The Council revoked its licence after the police applied for a review.

11.11 Under the previous regime, revocation of licences was the only option and licensing authorities were naturally reluctant to use this power except in extreme circumstances, resulting in only 354 revocations across all authorities between July 2003 and June 2004. The review powers under the new licensing regime offer a wider and more flexible range of options, including closure for short periods, and early evidence from SCs suggest that they are increasingly being used to deal with problem premises.

11.12 For instance, in Nottingham the licensing authority has carried out three reviews, all of which were the result of local police test purchasing operations around underage sales. In one case the licence was revoked, but in two of the cases the premises licences were suspended for a number of weeks and additional conditions were added before the premises could re-open. A further premises caught by the test purchasing regime voluntarily closed for 6 weeks and agreed to vary its licence by offering further conditions to control underage admission and sales, rather than go through a review.

11.13 Similarly, in Havering the police have initiated two reviews for crime and disorder issues including drug dealing, underage sales, problems with door staff, price fixing and insufficient CCTV provision. In one case, the licence has been revoked,

but the other premises has had its licence suspended for a month. A further review initiated by an interested party following an incident of assault on the premises resulted in formal warning from the licensing committee.

### Use of local discretion

11.14 The Act and Guidance were framed to give licensing authorities as much discretion as possible to allow them to reflect local circumstances. One theme emerging strongly from our discussions with SCs is the extent to which they have taken advantage of this flexibility and developed slightly different approaches to take account of the local situation and priorities.

11.15 In Taunton Deane, for instance, the authority has defined 'vicinity' in its licensing policy as, normally, 100m radius from a given premises, but will consider exceptions if presented with convincing arguments by applicants or interested parties. Authorities in Bristol and Cardiff, on the other hand, consider each application on a case by case basis and take into account the potential impact to properties located some distance away on routes home from the premises. For instance, in Cardiff a premises within a mainly residential area used extensively by students from outside the area had its hours restricted following representations from objectors living some way from the premises, but on the main route to it.

## **12. LICENSING ISSUES**

12.1 SCs identified a number of issues around the practical implementation and interpretation of the Act and made a number of suggestions aimed at improving and fine tuning the current arrangements.

### **12.2 Arrangements for advertising applications**

The majority of Councils agreed that the current advertising arrangements could be improved and put forward several suggestions, as follows, although there was no consensus on the preferred approach.

- A letter drop to all residents living in the vicinity of a premises, either in addition to the current advertising requirements or instead of the newspaper advert, which some felt was not effective, particularly where there was more than one local paper, and expensive. Some favoured the approach in the Gambling Act which gives applicants a choice of advertising options and asks them to choose two out of three, depending on local circumstances. The majority of SCs agreed that the local authority should carry out the leaflet drop, rather than the applicant, to ensure consistency. Some SCs are already doing this; for example, Havering licensing authority writes to all local residents living within 100m of the premises to inform them of the application. However, other SCs felt that this could lead to problems around the definition of vicinity.

Any changes to the advertising arrangements would require an amendment to the Regulations. DCMS will consider the suggestions put forward by SCs as part of its ongoing work to monitor and evaluate the licensing regime.

- Local authorities should be able to inform councillors of new applications in their area so that they can advise residents. Some SCs are already doing this,

but are concerned about whether it could be construed as 'soliciting' representations.

This issue is being considered in the full review of Guidance and options will be included in the Consultative Document to be issued in the autumn.

- Applicants should include more detail on notices, e.g. hours varied from/to, licensable activities applied for, etc and should ensure that they are clearly displayed.

This issue was considered in the initial review of the Guidance and the current text has been amended to state that notices should include all relevant details (see Annex 2, item 1 for full text). To make this a legal requirement would require an amendment to the regulations.

- Applicants should be required to copy notices to the LA so that the LA can confirm that they have been posted and contain the correct information. However, some SCs thought that merely copying the notice would not be proof that it had been posted and licensing officers would still have to physically check the premises.

Any changes to the advertising arrangements would require an amendment to the Regulations. DCMS will consider the suggestions put forward by SCs as part of its ongoing work to monitor and evaluate the licensing regime.

### 12.3 Temporary Event Notices (TENs)

SCs raised a number of issues about the TENs process including:

- the 48 hour period during which the police may make objections. Some SCs thought that this was not long enough for the police to make an objection, particularly if notices were served on unmanned police stations on a Friday.
- whether all responsible authorities should be able to object and whether they should be able to make objections around other licensing objectives, such as public safety.
- the lack of discretion for licensing authorities to accept applications which had been submitted within 10 working days of the event.
- the annual limit of 5 temporary event notices per year for non personal licence holders and twelve for each unlicensed premises. The majority of SCs were against an increase in the TENs limits for village and other community halls.
- the requirement for a DPS to be present on licensed community premises should be examined as a better alternative to increasing TENs limits.

All these issues were considered by DCMS as part of a recent review of the TENs regulations and the Minister specifically asked SCs for their views on the issues relating to village halls and the TEN limitations. On 5 July, the Minister announced

that the Government would, subject to public consultation, seek to remove the requirement for village halls and other community venues to have a designated premises supervisor, but would not extend the annual cap of 12 TENs for unlicensed venues. DCMS will keep other issues under consideration as part its ongoing work to monitor and evaluate the licensing regime.

#### **12.4 Role of the Personal Licence Holder (PLH) and Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS)**

Several councils asked for greater clarity about the roles and liability of the DPS and PLH, particularly in respect to authorisation of sale when they are absent for long periods, and the number of premises for which a DPS could be responsible.

DCMS has already issued advice on this issue in response to official correspondence and this has been consolidated in the supplement to the Guidance. The amended text (see Annex 2, item 2) clarifies that:

- the PLH does not have to supervise directly each sale of alcohol;
- where the PLH is absent for a long period, they will need to authorise staff to sell alcohol in their absence, for example by a specific oral or written statement given to the individual.
- a DPS may be responsible for more than one premises as long as they can fully discharge their responsibilities under the Act.

This issue is being considered further in the full review of Guidance and options will be included in the Consultative Document to be issued in the autumn.

#### **12.5 Role of Responsible Authorities**

Some responsible authorities were very engaged in the licensing process and were clear about their role and responsibilities, others were less so. However, there were no clear trends or patterns across all ten SCs and it was clear that the situation is changing all the time as responsible authorities become more used to the process and more aware of their role in it. Most SCs thought it would be helpful to have more central guidance to responsible authorities on their roles and responsibilities in the new licensing regime.

SCs identified a need for greater alignment between the planning and licensing regime and more clarity about the legal situation when planning committees imposed different opening hours to licensing committees.

DCMS has clarified in the supplementary Guidance that where opening hours imposed by planning and licensing bodies differ, the applicant must observe the earlier hours (see Annex 2, item 3 for amended text). DCMS will discuss the wider issue of greater alignment between the two regimes with DCLG.

#### **12.6 Role of Councillors**

Some SCs felt that local councillors, because of their links to the local community, should play a bigger part in the licensing process so that they could make representations even if they did not live in the vicinity and had not been approached by residents. In other words, they should automatically qualify as interested parties

in their own right. However, other SCs were concerned about possible perceptions of bias from other parties, particularly businesses, if councillors were given these powers.

DCMS will keep the situation under review. Any change to the legal position of councillors would require a change to primary legislation.

### **12.7 Confidentiality of Representations**

Some SCs reported that, in isolated cases, residents had felt uncomfortable about making representations because of the requirement to divulge their names and addresses to the applicant, and in a few cases had withdrawn their complaints entirely. Some SCs were addressing this issue by advising residents to make their representations via the relevant responsible authority or ward councillor. Another approach suggested was to withhold names and addresses in exceptional cases where the resident had reasonable concerns (e.g. where a premises was known to be involved in drugs or other crimes), but to supply sufficient information, such as the road name, to establish that the resident lived in the vicinity. Most SCs agreed that there should be additional guidance on how to deal with these isolated cases.

This issue is being considered in the full review of Guidance and options will be included in the Consultative Document to be issued in the summer.

### **12.8 Application Forms**

SCs suggested a number of minor improvements to the application form to make it more user friendly. They also felt that it would be useful to have more guidance on the form itself rather than in guidance to applicants on the DCMS website.

DCMS will keep the situation under review. Any changes to the form would require a change to the regulations.

### **12.9 Variations**

SCs raised a number of issues round the process for applying for variations to licences.

- the Guidance introduces the concept of a 'major' variation, which is not in the legislation, but is silent on what constitutes a 'substantial' variation according to the Act. The Guidance should be brought in line with the Act and provide advice on what constitutes a substantial variation.
- There should be a simplified process or perhaps a 'slip rule' in the Guidance for very minor structural changes to a premises. For example, licensing authorities could allow applicants to submit a revised plan and waive the requirement for a new application form.

The supplementary Guidance provides some clarification of the use of the term 'major' variation (see Annex 2, item 4), but this issue will also be considered in the full review of Guidance and options will be included in the Consultative Document to be issued in the autumn. However, the Guidance cannot go beyond the Act and any fundamental changes would require an amendment to the legislation.

## 12.10 Cumulative Impact Policies (CIPs)

A number of SCs have put in place special policies on cumulative impact and others are considering introducing them. All SCs agreed that CIPs were not a solution in themselves, but could only work as part of a broad strategy involving a range of enforcement and other measures and good partnership working.

SCs agreed that CIPs were generally working well, but some felt that they could usefully be extended to cover off sales such as off licences where groups of youths tended to congregate, resulting in crime and disorder.

This issue is being considered in the full review of Guidance and options will be included in the Consultative Document to be issued in the autumn.

## 12.11 Vicinity

SCs varied widely in their interpretation of vicinity, with some taking a more liberal view and including routes home on main roads and others prescribing a set distance from licensed premises in their licensing policy. Some SCs thought it would be useful to have more guidance on vicinity, but others felt it was preferable to have local discretion. A set distance from a premises might be suitable for a rural area, for instance, but not for an urban centre.

This issue is being considered in the full review of Guidance and options will be included in the Consultative Document to be issued in the autumn.

## 13. CONCLUSIONS

### The Scrutiny Council Initiative

13.1 The Scrutiny Council initiative has met and, in many areas, exceeded its stated aims and objectives and has been a success at many levels, providing:

- a good example of successful partnership working between central and local government;
- an insight into how the national policy framework has been translated into local licensing policies;
- practical experience of how the licensing regime is being implemented in a range of local authorities;
- examples of good practice and innovation, including some excellent partnership working between SCs, their responsible authorities and interested parties;
- Quantitative data and qualitative case study material to inform Ministers and the wider Government strategy on the prevention of alcohol abuse.
- evidence to support the initial and medium term review of the statutory Guidance, leading to proposals for clarification, addition and changes.

- evidence to inform the DCLG's 'How to' programme on Managing Town Centres.
- evidence to inform the independent Fees Review Panel.

13.2 From a DCMS point of view the SC initiative has also given us a valuable opportunity to speak directly to licensing practitioners and to experience at first hand how the regime is being implemented in England and Wales.

13.3 The response from the Councils themselves has also been overwhelmingly positive. They saw the initiative as 'a really welcome opportunity to talk directly to DCMS about day to day issues around the implementation of the Act' and 'a chance to network and share experiences and best practice with other licensing authorities around the country'. In some cases, SCS have used the contacts they have developed during the initiative to form regional networks which will continue after the initiative ends.

13.4 The Scrutiny Council initiative has come to a formal conclusion, but all partners are keen to maintain the special relationship that we have developed over the past 6 months. One SC representative has already been nominated as a practitioner member of the stakeholder group that is advising DCMS on the full review of Guidance. We may also use the SC network to test any future policy proposals.

### **The Licensing Regime**

13.5 The licensing regime is still bedding down and it is too early to say whether the Act has been a success yet but, seven months after the Act came into force, the early signs from this sample of licensing authorities are encouraging. SCs told us:

- 'Residents are much more aware of what they can do to resolve problems at a premises and licensees are much more aware of their responsibilities'.
- 'Responsible authorities have engaged with the process and used their ability to make representations in a positive way to help applicants meet the licensing objectives'.
- 'The police are increasingly using their enforcement powers under the Act to tackle problem premises'.
- 'In many areas, the Act has been a catalyst for greater partnership working'.

Ministers will consider the issues raised in this report and will take them forward as appropriate in the context of the Department's ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the impact of the Act and our better regulation agenda.