

Committee: LICENSING & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Agenda Item

Date: 4 March 2014

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Title: ADDENDUM TO ITEM NO.4 ON THE AGENDA

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Item for information

Summary

1. This addendum is to inform members of the government's response to the consultation on locally set fees which was published on the 26 February 2015.

Recommendations

2. That members note the contents of this report.

Financial Implications

3. As per the original report.

Background Papers

4. As per the original report.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	As per the original report.
Community Safety	As per the original report.
Equalities	As per the original report.
Health and Safety	As per the original report.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	As per the original report.
Sustainability	As per the original report.
Ward-specific impacts	As per the original report.
Workforce/Workplace	As per the original report.

Situation

6. The government has now published its response to the consultation exercise on locally set fees. Members will recall that broadly the proposal was that each authority should set its own fees under the Licensing Act 2003, that the fees should be set on a cost recovery basis but that there would be caps above which local authorities would not be permitted to charge.
7. The government reports that there were 681 responses to the consultation. Given that it is difficult to understand why it has taken almost a year to analyse the replies particularly bearing in mind that 573 were to the questions on the online questionnaire.
8. Over two-thirds of the respondents were from fee payers and most of the remaining third were from licensing authorities.
9. Fee payers were in general strongly opposed to locally set fees. Three-quarters of those who responded disagreed with the abandonment of the non-domestic rate bands to determine fee levels. In the light of this response, the government has decided not to introduce locally set licensing fees at the present time. The Home Office is to work with the Local Government Association in obtaining evidence as to the cost involved in delivering licensing functions and the capacity of licensing authorities to measure those costs. Although the response to the consultation acknowledges that fees have not increased for 12 years there is no suggestion that the government proposes amending the fees at this time.
10. A further aspect of the consultation was that some large chains had requested that the annual fee should be paid on the same date for all licences in the same year. Licensing authorities were generally opposed to this as the administrative burden would be enormous. The government does not appear to be impressed with the licensing authorities' response but has been moved by the fact that 56% of fee payers did not support a single payment date for annual fees and only 31% did support it. The government therefore will not impose a single payment date but is likely to give licence holders the option specifying the date in the year in which they wish to pay the annual fee.

Risk Analysis

11. There are no risks associated with this report.