

Alcohol and Regulated Entertainment Sub-Committee  
28 October 2024

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the ALCOHOL AND REGULATED ENTERTAINMENT SUB-COMMITTEE held on Monday 28 October 2024 at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE

PRESENT: Councillors J.Cragg, D.Jones and B.Sarson

OFFICIALS SS, Regulatory Senior Lawyer  
PRESENT: Tupling, Licensing Technical Officer  
C.Cade, Governance Service Manager  
N.Vohra, Governance Apprentice

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7. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Councillors Sarson and Jones moved and seconded the nomination for Councillor Cragg to chair the meeting.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

No declarations of interest were received.

9. APPLICATION FOR QUEENSWOOD SCHOOL

Introduction and Procedure

The purpose of the meeting was to consider an application from Queenswood School.

The applicant is in line with legislation by displaying Blue Notices at the Premises on the 2nd September 2024 and advertised the application in the Welwyn Hatfield Times on the 4th September 2024, the Public register was updated and placed on the Councils website and all the Responsible Authorities, Parish Councils and Councillors were notified.

The Licence Hearing is because of the Licensing Authority receiving a formal written relevant representation against the application from Hertfordshire Public Health which remains outstanding. The representation to the application has been submitted under the Licensing Act 2003 on the statutory ground of protection of children from harm.

Documentary Evidence

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The report of the Licensing Officer, the premises licence application and supporting documents, along with written representations from the relevant authorities which had been previously circulated.

#### Report of the Licensing Officer

The Licensing Officer presented the report.

The application was received Stephanie Hall, Head of Catering and Lettings at Queenswood School on behalf of the premises licence holder Queenswood School Ltd under the Licensing Act 2003 for a variation to the premises licence.

The variation was to remove mandatory condition 1, remove condition 4, amend mandatory condition 3 and remove conditions 1-3 from Annex 2. The school was seeking the removal and amendment to conditions on the existing premises licence as the premises find the current licence restrictive. The school were seeking removal of mandatory condition 1 as part of a new educational scheme which would include the introduction of a school social event club where students aged 16–18 years old (who are pre-registered with the school as part of the scheme and have their parent/guardian's permission to be part of the scheme) could be served a maximum of 2 glasses of beer, wine or cider (not including spirits) with a meal at a school social event. The sale of alcohol would be with the student's parent/guardian so no sale of alcohol to students would take place at social club events. The school are proposing additional added controls as part of the scheme which can be found in the agenda pack.

In determining the application, the sub-committee may on behalf of the licensing authority, and having regard to the promotion of the licensing objectives, statute, guidance and policy decide on the following courses of action:

- a) To grant the licence as proposed
- b) To modify the conditions of the licence by altering or omitting or adding to them (and for this purpose the conditions of the licence are modified if any of them is altered or omitted or any new condition is added)
- c) To exclude any of the licensable activities to which the application relates.
- d) To refuse to specify a person in the licence as the designated premises supervisor.
- e) To reject the whole of the application or part of it.

#### The Applicant, Queenswood School - Stephanie Hall, Ceri Stokes and Ian Williams

The following points were made and noted:

- A social club for 6 formers at the school would be introduced where students would be able to have alcohol with a meal.
- The current license for the school was restrictive.
- The goal for introducing alcohol at the school social club was to prepare students for university and later in life, etiquette around drinking and how to say no. This would be supported by the school's PHSE programme
- Staff would safeguard the students.

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- Parental permission would be needed for students to be able to participate.
- There would be a wrist band system for those included in the social club.

The below points of clarification were received following members questions:

- Boarding school students have 3 meals per day. Alcohol would only be served at the Social Club events for sixth formers with a meal 3-4 times a year.
- Sixth form students range from 16-18 years old.
- Annex 1 set out a change to allow alcohol within “school grounds”. The amendment had been requested following a meeting with the Police.
- Drinks included would be beer and wine. No spirits would be served.
- A member raised concerns about how this would isolate non-drinking students by choice, and/or for religious/cultural reason. The school hoped that discussions would remove the taboo regarding alcohol and teach students how to say no.
- If the school was to be hired out by an external body they would have to apply for a separate temporary event licence in order to be able to serve alcohol.
- A policy on the use of alcohol and disciplinary actions which would be taken, had not been produced as it was not currently required. If a student arrived pre-drunk or did not follow the rules a meeting would be held with the student and their parent/guardian.

#### Hertfordshire Public Health – Aideen Dunne and Adele O’Boy

The following points were made and noted:

- Concerns were raised regarding providing access to alcohol to under 18 year olds.
- There had been a downward trend between the age group and drinking alcohol which had also led to a decrease in hospital attendance. Hertfordshire remains above the national average in this trend.
- Concern was raised regarding the unintended consequences of the proposed licensing amendments.
- The applicant does not define how frequently events serving alcohol would be held.
- It was felt that using the restaurant style model (e.g. wine/beer with a parent/guardian) would be significantly different in a school environment.
- The World Health Organisation have stated there are no safe levels of alcohol consumption.
- There are health harms which could be greater to younger people as they are still developing.
- There are known impacts on mental health from the use of alcohol.
- The programme could risk normalising alcohol in social settings.
- There is potential that not all students would disclose the medication they take which could have unintended consequences, and a social club should teach students they can have fun without alcohol.

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- An equalities assessment had not taken place so it was not possible to say whether groups/individuals would be isolated.
- It was noted that alcohol was considered worse than vaping but the school had a vaping policy.

The applicant and objectors made their final addresses to the Alcohol and Regulated Sub-Committee.

The Alcohol and Regulated Sub-Committee retired to deliberate a decision.

#### Determination

The Sub-Committee considered the application from Queenswood School for a variation to the existing premises licence.

The Sub-Committee having heard representations, objections and submissions from all parties, carefully considered in its deliberation all information provided, oral and written, and in making the decision the four licensing objectives namely,

- The prevention of crime and disorder
- Public safety
- The prevention of public nuisance
- The protection of children from harm

The Sub-Committee also considered the National Guidance and the Councils own licensing policy.

Each objective being of paramount importance.

Having heard from all parties the Sub-Committee were concerned of the risks to the students, and that there wasn't submitted with the application a visible Alcohol Policy, and they didn't feel the measures the School put forward in representations were sufficient to negate those concerns.

On this occasion they felt the licensing objectives would not be met and without the Alcohol Policy and therefore the Sub-Committee have rejected the whole application.

The full determination will be published in 5 working days.

The parties are reminded they have 21 days to appeal the decision.