

**ABERDEENSHIRE LICENSING BOARD
NORTH DIVISION**

Minute of a Meeting of the **LICENSING BOARD** for the **NORTH DIVISION** of **ABERDEENSHIRE**, with the **NIGHTCLUB OPERATORS** held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ARBUTHNOT HOUSE, PETERHEAD** on **Wednesday 31st March 2010 at 2.00p.m.**

- Present -

- From the Board -

Mr. S. Pratt (Convener); Mrs A. Allan; Mr A. Duncan; Mr. R. Thomas; Mr. N. Smith

- From The Licensed Trade –

Mark D. Forsyth, S. Aiken, A. Tait, C. MacDonald, M. Buchan. J. Fisher, F. MacKinnon, Vicki Lamb, Arthur McGoff

- From the Statutory Consultees –

Chief Inspector Cronin, Inspector Esson and Sergeant Main, Grampian Police, Keith Simpson, Senior Licensing Standards Officer, Robin Currie and Andrew Sutherland, Licensing Standards Officers

- In Attendance –

Miss. F. M. Stewart, Depute Clerk to the Board

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- From the Board -

Apologies were received from Mr. Mair, Mr. J Duncan, Mr. Gray, Mrs Norrie

- From the Trade –

Des Cheyne, Seafield Nightclub, Banff

- From the Statutory Consultees –

Gillian Milne Grampian Police, Sarah Ward, Licensing Standards Officer

2. DISPERSAL POLICIES

The Convenor thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He advised that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss dispersal policies from nightclubs. He invited Mark Forsyth to highlight the work he had done in relation to Dee Jays Nightclub, Fraserburgh.

Mark began by admitting that there had been problems relating to anti-social behaviour at Dee Jays Nightclub. He had been working with Inspector John Esson of Grampian Police.

Mark had decided that given the numbers attending on a Friday and the small number of premises open for snacks, it was not worth putting on a bus. However, on a Saturday he had put on a bus. Patrons were leaving quickly on the bus. He also had doormen working the car parking and acting as security on the bus.

He employed 8 doormen. These were spread around the building and into the car park. He had between 3 – 400 customers on a Saturday so it worked out at approximately 1 doorman per 50 customers.

3.00a.m. was the latest hours that nightclubs could be granted. Mark had deliberately set his closing time at 2.45a.m. That gave 15 minutes of time to get customers out of the premises onto the bus, the bus away and the car park cleared.

This system definitely worked for Dee Jays. Yes, people still hung around the premises but the numbers were so low they could be monitored on CCTV and if any later incidents occurred the Police were called in. He could only recommend this system to other nightclub operators.

Inspector Esson advised that he could only agree with what Mark had outlined. There was a noticeable difference both in the behaviour of patrons and in anti-social behaviour incidents within the surrounding streets and in Commerce Street in particular. The bus had drastically reduced the number of people walking home and therefore the number of anti-social incidents and noise incidents reported.

The Convenor advised that, from the Board's perspective, this system had worked well. The Clerk advised that the Board had seen for themselves the numbers of patrons being dispersed from nightclubs at 3.00a.m. in the morning when they had been out on visits with the Police. The Board were keen to work with operators to improve the dispersal policies in place, which would in turn assist them in complying with the licensing objectives. Of particular concern to the Board was the number of premises where the stewards were very good at getting the licensed premises themselves cleared but then shut the doors and left the patrons in the streets to police themselves. Operators were reminded that they were also responsible for what happened in the immediate vicinity of their premises. This did not mean that operators were responsible for policing the whole town, but they did need to take some responsibility for ensuring that streets were cleared quickly, calmly and efficiently at the end of the evening.

The Convenor asked if anyone had any questions. There were none.

Chief Inspector Cronin reminded operators that the Board could call for anti-social behaviour reports. Thanks to their dispersal policy, if asked for Dee Jays there would be a negative incident report going to the Board for that area because of the reduction in incidents. The Police were also looking to implement dispersal policies at some of the shows and galas taking place and would be seeking the assistance of organisers in clearing people away from these events.

Mr. Smith pointed out that it was very noticeable to Board Members in Queen Street in Peterhead that there were a lot of people milling about waiting on taxis. Proper dispersal policies would certainly assist in clearing the crowds a lot quicker.

Mark Forsyth indicated that the bus was taking a large number of people away much quicker than if left to their own devices. Nightclubs staggering their closing times didn't work. It was much better to have the bus. It didn't take very long for customers to get used to leaving on the bus and the go.

There were costs. Mark hired a double decker bus from Watermill Coaches. It cost £150 plus 2 doormen. It took 15 minutes to go round the town. There was a £2 charge for the bus which came pretty close to covering the costs of £60-70 per night.

The Convenor advised that the situation in Peterhead could quite easily have gotten out of hand. With a bit of work, the nightclub operators could quite easily assist in clearing the area. The Board was looking to operators to see what could be done voluntarily and in conjunction with each other. The Board did have a requirement in their Policy Statement for Dispersal Policies to be in place.

Jackie Fisher commented on an issue that had been raised at the early meeting with the licensed trade in connection with curfews. She had operated a curfew at her premises for many years. The Board asked that this be looked at in conjunction with the other licensees in that particular area to see if a solution could be found. The Board was not generally in favour of imposing a curfew and, indeed, the curfew imposed by the City of Aberdeen was about to be removed because it had not worked. If, however, problems were occurring and local solutions could not be found, the Board may have to revisit this issue.

There being no other business, the Convenor thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

**STUART PRATT
CONVENER**