

**JOINT MEETING OF THE ABERDEENSHIRE LICENSING BOARD (NORTH DIVISION) AND NORTH ABERDEENSHIRE LICENSING FORUM - 31 MARCH, 2010**

**ANNUAL UPDATE – NORTH ABERDEENSHIRE LICENSING FORUM**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Aberdeenshire Licensing Board (North Division) with an update of the progress made by the North Aberdeenshire Licensing Forum following the joint meeting of 29 April, 2009.

**2 Background**

- 2.1 The following information provides the Joint Meeting with details of the work undertaken by the North Aberdeenshire Licensing Forum during the period March 2009 to March 2010 and information relating to Forum membership and future work plans.

**3 Proposal**

- 3.1 It is proposed that Members note the content of the report.

**4 Discussion**

- 4.1 Over the course of the last year the North Aberdeenshire Licensing Forum has considered a number of topics of discussion and undertaken work in relation to the overprovision policy and the promotion of the role of the Forum within local communities.
- 4.2 Early 2009 was spent undertaking research into the overprovision of licensed premises in North Aberdeenshire. A sub-group of the Forum was delegated authority to undertake this task and members looked at the information and statistics available to them on overprovision. This included information from Grampian Police, the Community Substance Misuse Service and Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drug Action Team. The Forum agreed that there was no evidence of overprovision in the North Aberdeenshire area and a report detailing the sub-group's findings was submitted to the North Licensing Board in April, 2009.
- 4.3 At a meeting of the Forum in June, 2009 it was identified that there was a need to raise public awareness of the Forum and a requirement to attract new applications for membership. On that basis, a work plan was formulated with the aim of making the public aware that there was a change in licensing law and that local communities were aware that a Forum existed to represent their issues and concerns with regard to local licensing matters. A sub-group of the Forum was delegated authority to look at the objectives of this work plan and to ensure the aims were realised. The sub-group looked at

promoting the role of the Forum by designing eye-catching and informative leaflets and posters, by creating a series of slides for Aberdeenshire Live and producing a press release for issue to local and regional newspapers and radio stations.

- 4.4 In conjunction with Aberdeenshire Council's Graphic Design team and Corporate Communications unit, promotional material was successfully designed, produced and distributed across Aberdeenshire to coincide with the commencement of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 on 1 September, 2009.
- 4.5 Work was also undertaken to develop a Licensing Forum webpage within the Licensing section of the Council's website. This webpage has now been live for several months and includes details of membership, meeting dates and previous minutes and agendas of the Forum. The content of this webpage will be developed on an ongoing basis and may include details of work being undertaken by the Forum. The most recent addition to the webpage has been the development of an online discussion board. It is anticipated that the discussion board will increase community involvement and generate discussion on local licensing issues at a grassroots level. The discussion board currently asks the public to comment on various issues relating to the five licensing objectives. The Forum recognises that promotion of this facility is essential in order for it to become a useful tool to gain community views on local licensing issues.
- 4.6 The Forum recognises that promoting its function and role within the community is an area which requires constant attention. In terms of future activities the Forum hopes to attend local galas and shows over the summer months to achieve this goal, and to increase community engagement. It is anticipated that this will be done in conjunction with NHS colleagues. The Forum is also keen to hold a Question & Answer session with students from Banff & Buchan College. It is hoped that the Forum will gain useful information from the young people with regard to their attitudes to alcohol and other related issues.
- 4.7 An important piece of work for the Forum in the coming months is in connection with the renewal of the Board's Policy Statement. The Forum intends to look at the impact of the current Policy Statement and will determine whether it adequately deals with important local issues. The Forum recognises the importance of obtaining the views of local communities and the need to provide the Board with evidence to support any recommendations it makes. The Forum is considering how best to achieve this requirement.
- 4.8 During the course of the previous twelve months, the North Aberdeenshire Licensing Forum has been represented at a meeting of the Aberdeenshire Forum and Board Conveners; the Annual National Licensing Conference in Aviemore; a meeting with Linda Bowie, Acting National Licensing Development Officer, which was held jointly with members of the Aberdeen City Licensing Forum; and regional training sessions for Forum members, which was organised by Alcohol Focus Scotland.

- 4.9 In terms of membership capacity, the Forum is now at its strongest, with seventeen members. There is good representation of licence holders and persons resident in the Forum area. Recently, the Forum accepted two applications from persons having a function relating to education, a first for the Forum and there is also health and social work representation from the Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership and Barnardos. The Forum has experienced difficulties in attracting young people as members but efforts continue to be made in this respect.
- 4.10 It is anticipated that the Forum will build on the work of the previous twelve months and continue to raise awareness of its function and increase community engagement. The Forum recognises the importance of having active members and a structured work plan to be wholly effective.

## **5 Recommendations**

**The Joint Meeting is recommended to:-**

**1 note the content of the report.**

Assistant Committee Officer

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9 March, 2010

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Aberdeenshire Licensing Forum