

Policing and Crime Bill

Summary

This paper updates members on the development of those sections of the Policing and Crime Reduction Bill that relate to the licensing of alcohol.

Recommendations

That members note these recent developments.

Policing and Crime Bill

Background

1. The Policing and Crime Reduction Bill (PCR), published on 18 December 2008, introduces measures aimed at reducing alcohol related harm. These measures fall into three distinct areas:
 - Mandatory national conditions placed on all licences (Category A)
 - A list of conditions that can be applied to more than one licence by the local licensing authority, where it can be shown that this will further the prevention of alcohol related crime and disorder (Category B)
 - Guidance on how licensed premises can help reduce alcohol related harm (Category C)

Progress

2. Following its second reading on 19 January, the Bill was debated in committee during February 2009. A date for the Bill's Report stage is yet to be set.
3. During committee, the LGA helped legislators to lay four amendments, in line with the Board's recommendations from its 13 January meeting. The amendments were drafted to empower elected members and licensing authorities to instigate action on problem drinking at the local level, and also to remove unnecessary extra regulation of those licensed premises that are not a cause for concern.
4. The four amendments were:
 - To remove the power for the Secretary of State to impose mandatory national conditions on all premises;
 - To class elected members as "interested parties" in a licence review, without the need for a written statement to this effect from an existing interested party;
 - To remove the need for Category B conditions to be drawn from a list approved by the Secretary of State (i.e. to allow licensing authorities to develop their own conditions);
 - To give elected members and licensing authorities to power to make representations in an application for a Temporary Event Notice (TEN)
5. The first three amendments were debated, though not accepted by the Government. The amendment relating to TENs was ruled outside the scope of this bill.

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6. The debate in committee drew strongly on the LGA's briefing. There was cross-party support in particular for the amendment to class elected members as "interested parties" in a licence review, with Lynda Waltho MP (Labour, Stourbridge) who laid the amendment, Paul Holmes MP (Liberal Democrat, Chesterfield) and James Brokenshire MP (Conservative, Hornchurch) all supporting it.
7. The transcript of the debate is available under 11th and 12th sittings (12 February) at <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2008-09/policingandcrime.html#2008-09>

Next Steps

8. As agreed at the 13 January board meeting, LGA officers continue to work with Home Office and other government departments on the detail of the new alcohol retailing code. Subject to these discussions, and to report stage and third reading in the Commons, the LGA will support further amendments during the Lords stage.

Financial Implications

9. This work can be managed from existing resources.

Implications for Wales

10. The Policing and Crime Reduction Bill provisions apply to Wales. Specific issues of concern to Welsh Authorities will be raised as the bill proceeds through Parliament.

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