

13 July 2010

Licensing Reform

Summary

This paper outlines the scope and Parliamentary timetable for the Policing, Crime and Social Responsibility Bill (PRSR). This Bill seeks, amongst other things, to make changes to parts of the current licensing regime.

Recommendations

That members note the report and discuss an initial, outline LGA position of the relevant clauses contained in the Bill.

Action

Officers to reflect members' views in future lobbying on the Bill.

Licensing Reform

Background

1. The first session of the current parliament will run until the end of July. Parliament will return from recess in early September, before party conference season. The next Queen's Speech will be held in November 2011.
2. The **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill** is one of twenty-three Bills currently before Parliament. Its aim is to *make police forces more accountable and crack down on anti-social behaviour and alcohol-related violence*.
3. As well as the licensing clauses discussed in this paper the Bill will also seek to make changes to Police accountability. This will be a major issue for both government and the LGA and will, to a large extent, dictate both the focus of our lobbying work and the progress of the Bill through Parliament.

Content and context of the Bill

4. The Bill promises to *Overhaul the Licensing Act to give local authorities stronger powers* Specific measures contained within it include clauses to:
 - Allow councils to shut down any shop or bar found to be persistently selling alcohol to children.
 - Ban the sale of alcohol below cost price.
 - Permit local councils to charge more for late-night licenses.
5. The LGA, in its on-the-day response to the Queen's Speech, welcomed measures to increase powers for councils to remove licenses from problem premises, and to shut down shops known to be selling alcohol to children. However, we have argued that any additional revenue from increased licence fees would not be ring fenced for providing extra policing. Late night licences also affect other services, such as street cleaning, and it is important that these can also be funded through licensing revenues.
6. Councils would welcome the power to set locally the floor price for the sale of alcohol in conjunction with the police and local partners.

Next steps

7. The LGA Group Executive met to discuss the priority of lobbying work on new legislation, and agreed that the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill would have a High/Medium priority, dependent on the LGA line on police reform.

8. The Bill will be introduced to Parliament in September 2010. It is not clear yet which Minister(s) will be responsible for the Bill. LGA Group Officers are currently involved in pre-consultation with the Home Office on aspects of the Bill and will bring a further report to the CTS Board once more detailed policy proposals have been made.
9. Members should be aware that the licensing and social responsibility aspects of the Bill are likely to receive less time for debate during the passage of the Bill due to the controversial nature of the proposals on police reform. This will make it harder to amend the legislation during Parliamentary scrutiny.

Financial Implications

10. None arising from this report. The financial implication of the PRSR Bill to be assessed when it is introduced to Parliament.

Implications for Wales

11. The Licensing Act extends to Wales, and changes made in the PRSR will have implications for Wales. Officers will liaise with Welsh authorities on issues of specific concern.

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