

PRESS RELEASE August 2013

TOWN COUNCIL LODGES APPEAL AGAINST GREYHOUND LICENSING REVIEW

At an Extraordinary Meeting on Wednesday 28th August, Midsomer Norton Town Council resolved to lodge an appeal against the outcome of a licensing review for the Greyhound Hotel in Midsomer Norton.

Bath and North East Somerset Council's Licensing Sub Committee considered a review of the licence at a meeting at the end of July. The review had been called by its own Licensing Officers as a result of evidence that conditions had been continuously ignored over the previous 18 months. Despite heavily criticising the premises for these actions in their decision summary which they described as having as having resulted in the licensing objectives being "seriously undermined" and also recognising the significant effect on residents, the Sub Committee then decided to impose a reduction in operating hours - but only for a period of 3 months.

The decision will effectively allow the premises to revert to its original conditions after 3 months and at the same time the Sub Committee removed a condition that prevented entry or re-entry after 12.00 midnight. Despite the licence holder, Punch Taverns, along with the Licensing Authority and the Police reaching an agreement ahead of the review which would have changed the conditions on a permanent basis, the Sub Committee appears to have ignored this as well as a large portfolio of evidence.

Cllr Linda Dunford, who also chairs the Midsomer Norton Community Alcohol Partnership, tabled a proposal to the Town Council to appeal against the outcome of the review as this was the only route available to them to challenge the outcome. "It was regrettable that the Town Council was effectively forced in to a corner over the review and lodging an appeal was always seen as a last resort. We have made great progress in the town in tackling the anti-social behaviour of a very small minority that is most often as a direct result of alcohol. The majority of licensed premises have abided by conditions that reduce the incidences of crime – a fact confirmed by Radstock Police at a recent CAP meeting where they reported that there had been a fall of over 80% in reported criminal damage and a fall of over 20% in assaults on people. If the appeal had not been lodged, much of the progress that has been made would effectively have been lost".

Residents and licensees in the town also attended the Extraordinary Meeting and made representations in the public Session before the Council debated and voted on the resolution. Deputy Mayor and Ward Councillor Michael Evans said after the meeting "The Council felt that it owed it to the residents and other licensees to challenge the review outcome and continue with the work that it has supported in improving the environment of the town at night. The decision of the Sub Committee defies logic and as a Town and Ward Councillor, I felt it was my duty to support the resolution to appeal – otherwise the work of the CAP and the Council would all have been for nothing. It's not about stopping people having a good time or restricting the business of our licensed premises. But conditions on licences are there for everyone's benefit and lodging an appeal allows us to try and make sure that this remains the case".

The appeal was lodged with Bath Magistrates and the Town Council has engaged legal support to prepare for the hearing which will take place later in the year. In the meantime, all of the current conditions at the premises will remain.