

Briefing Note to the *Licensing Committee*

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Rewiring Public Services



Report Author: *Julia Cleary*
Job Title: *Democratic Services Manager*
Email: *Julia.cleary@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk*
Telephone: *01782 742227*

Introduction

New simpler and more modern licensing laws have been put forward by the Local Government Association, which has called for licensing reform to provide a more effective and efficient system to businesses and the public.

The LGA report which is attached to this briefing note, 'Open for Business: Rewiring Licensing', calls for a consistent, simple, system which can address the public's and businesses' concerns.

The LGA argues that businesses and councils have to deal with an outdated and complex licensing system which imposes unnecessary costs and burdens. They propose a major overhaul to scrap some licensing laws and update others. The changes would include allowing businesses to go through a single application process, leading to a single licence tailored to their business needs, introducing new powers to withdraw licences for non-compliance, which would lead to a simpler 'licence for life' principle.

The LGA also advocate new licensing objectives to help councils tackle clustering, especially of licensed premises, on high streets.

Proposals include:

- Government undertakes a comprehensive review of the licensing legislation to determine what can be scrapped, or amended and consolidated.
- A reformed licensing framework should be overseen by a single Government Department. The Government should deliver on their overdue commitment to localise alcohol fees.

- Licensing decisions should be reached locally based on a broader set of licensing objectives that includes the protection of public health. Businesses should be able to apply to councils for a single licence tailored to their business needs
- The licence for life should be consistently applied to all licences with clear mechanisms for addressing issues of non-compliance
- The process for appeal should be transparent and consistent across all licences ensuring no applicant is disadvantaged.
- When granting licences councils should be able to effectively consider local representation, where there is a public interest.
- Government should ensure that councils have the legal flexibility to offer diverse payment options to businesses.
- Councils should consider what more they can do to assist businesses, including direct debits and instalments.