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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Licensing and Regulatory Sub Committee
County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Friday, 12th November, 2021 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor J. Higginson (Chair)

County Councillors: R. Roden and B. Strong

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda O'Gorman	Principal Licensing Officer
Ben Davies	Solicitor
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

None.

1. Declarations of Interest

County Councillor R. Roden declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct as he knows the objector present at today's meeting. Councillor Roden and the objector attend the same church.

2. Application for a Premises Licence for "The Club" 15 Whitecross Street, Monmouth, Monmouthshire, NP25 3BY

The Licensing and Regulatory Committee considered an application under the Licensing Act 2003 for a Premises Licence for "The Club" 15 Whitecross Street, Monmouth, Monmouthshire, NP25 3BY.

The Chairman welcomed the applicant and the objector to the meeting and introduced Members of the Committee and the attending officers and explained the protocol for the meeting.

The applicant and the objector confirmed receipt of the report and were content to proceed with no legal representation.

The key issues and details were read out to the Committee.

The applicant was then given the opportunity to address the Committee, to put forward any relevant explanations. Following this, Members of the Committee put forward questions to the applicant and discussion ensued.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the Monmouthshire Conservative Club was on the verge of closure due to a failing business model and was not financially viable to remain open.

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- During the pandemic the premises were renovated.
- It was difficult to attract new member applications across the board due to the club's political persuasions.
- The applicant disassociated himself from the Conservative Party and re-named the premises 'The Club'.
- There was a need to attract a greater number of new members in order that the renovations and the new business model would be viable.
- The Club re-opened in May 2021 with 195 new applications received for membership.
- The business model is to create a private members' club.
- During this period a complaint had been made anonymously by a member that non-members were being admitted and that they were misbehaving. Advice from the Licensing officers stated that the applicant had to adhere to the premises licence currently in place and ensure that there was a guest signing in book for non-members visiting the premises. If more non-members were to be encouraged to visit the Club, with a view to becoming members, then the applicant would need to apply for a licenced premises licence.
- The Club is open from Midday to 11.00pm seven days a week.
- As a Conservative Club, Members are allowed to use the premises from 8.00am for non-alcohol related activities in the Club, such as use of the snooker tables.
- The club has a newly refurbished kitchen with a view to providing Sunday lunches.
- Local groups are encouraged to continue to access the Club as they have always done.
- The stewardess lives at the premises and is the licence holder.
- Any misbehaviour occurring within the Club is dealt with appropriately.
- The premises has a beer garden and has been open for as long as the Club has been open.
- The beer garden has been refurbished which has encouraged more people to use this area of the Club during the summer months.
- Non-members are required to be signed in by a member of the Club.

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- Bar staff and the licence holder are aware of, via staff training, the need to regularly visit the beer garden to ensure that noise levels are kept to a minimum.
- The applicant has taken the advice of Gwent Police and HSE and installed CCTV cameras in the beer garden which also records sound.
- Signage has been erected in the beer garden outlining the Club's zero tolerance to drugs. Signage in this location also requests members to be mindful of neighbours with a view to keeping noise levels to a minimum whilst in the beer garden and also when leaving this area.

The objector was then given the opportunity to address the Committee, to put forward any relevant explanations. Following this, Members of the Committee put forward questions to the objector and discussion ensued.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- Since the Club opened and 'all welcome' notices were erected, the noise in the beer garden, through the summer months, has been consistent and has caused considerable distress to neighbours in the area.
- Concern was expressed that the opening hours proposed in the new application would exacerbate the noise levels in the beer garden during the summer months.
- The main concern raised by the objector relates to the noise generated in the beer garden late at night. Concern was expressed that this matter would not be properly monitored by the Club.
- It was considered that it would be difficult for busy bar staff in an indoor venue to regularly monitor the beer garden outside the premises.
- The objector suggested that all aspects of the application be accepted but that there should be a limitation on serving alcohol and use of the beer garden at 9.30pm.

The applicant responded to the objector by stating that he would be in favour of a condition being added to the licence that the beer garden would be closed at 10.00pm every evening.

Following the statements made by the applicant and the objector, Members were given the opportunity to ask questions. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- In time, the applicant would like to move towards an over 25s members only policy.
- With regard to club members' behaviour, members cannot be excluded until they give good reason to be excluded.
- The size of the beer garden remains the same.

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- The Club operates a zero-tolerance policy to members and guests regarding poor behaviour.
- The objector stated that he would prefer a 'hard closure' of the beer garden at a designated time, whereby it would be closed club members.

The objector and the Applicant were then given the opportunity to sum up.

Following questioning, the Licensing and Regulatory Sub Committee and the Legal representative left the meeting to deliberate and discuss the findings.

Upon re-commencement, the Chair advised that the Committee had decided to grant the licence with the following conditions:

- Licensable activities to take place between the hours of 08:00 – 12:00am – reduced from 12:30am.
- The Club's Beer Garden shall be subject to a 'hard' closure at 10:00pm.

The meeting ended at 11.57 am.