

**TITLE OF REPORT:** North East Strategic Licensing Group Update  
**REPORT OF:** Mike Barker, Acting Chief Executive

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### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform the Committee of the recent work of the North East Strategic Licensing Group in respect of the Licensing Act.
2. Members will be aware that the North East Strategic Licensing Group is comprised of the twelve Local Authorities with responsibility for carrying out licensing functions across the North East. Elaine Rudman is the Chair and Tim Briton is the Vice Chair.
3. Members will be aware that in 2012 public health bodies became 'responsible bodies' under the Licensing Act, which recognises the valuable contribution they can make to the licensing regime through the information and expertise they offer.
4. Nationally, however, Directors of Public Health have encountered varying degrees of success in engaging with the licensing regime. In part this is due to the fact that public health data is not necessarily specific enough in relation to licensed premises in order to attach significant weight; and in part due to the fact that their concerns can on the face of it relate more to the consumption of alcohol than the sale.
5. In February this year, Public Health England launched a pilot project for an analytical toolkit designed to support Directors of Public Health in making best use of available data sources. Eight authorities participated in the pilot project, including Gateshead and Durham Councils in the North East.
6. As well as looking to make best use of available data within the parameters of the existing licensing objectives, the pilot project sought to gather evidence as to the likely consequences of adding a further public health related licensing objective into the Act.
7. A mock hearing took place in Gateshead, chaired by Councillor Dodds and with representatives of Gateshead and Durham Councils, to examine a scenario where this hypothetical fifth licensing objective would apply. The mock hearing was attended by regional and national representatives of Public Health England, officers and Members from

the North East Councils, and colleagues from the University of Sunderland who have produced an academic report setting out the outcomes of the national project.

8. The mock hearing highlighted –
  - a. the willingness of Members to have regard to all information that is relevant to their determination
  - b. the practical difficulties in the effective presentation of standalone public health data; and
  - c. the strength that is brought by responsible authorities working together.
9. The project lasted until the end of May. Unfortunately due to the short timescale, only one hearing took place where Gateshead's Director of Public Health made a representation. In that particular matter, the Committee were able to have regard to the public health concerns alongside similar issues raised by Northumbria Police, Environmental Health, the Licensing Authority, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and a number of local residents; and a successful outcome was achieved in terms of the effective promotion of the licensing objectives.
10. The processes that were developed in Gateshead through the pilot project have continued after the completion of the project, which is assisting the Director of Public Health to play an active role in the licensing regime through a joined up approach with the other responsible authorities. This is enabling concerns to be identified and addressed at an early stage, so that resources can be appropriately channelled.
11. The outcome of the project is now being discussed with the Home Office.
12. Additionally, Gambling Act training has been organised through the North East Strategic Licensing Group to take place in Middlesbrough on 9 November 2016. Further work is being undertaken at present to identify shared learning requirements and to facilitate training opportunities in the coming months.

## **Recommendations**

The Committee Members are asked to note the content of this Report.