

DISTRICT OF STIRLING LICENSING BOARD
MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY UPDATE REPORT FOR 2021

INTRODUCTION: ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

The District of Stirling Licensing Board (“the Board”) is constituted in terms of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005. The Board is responsible for the administration of liquor licensing, gambling licensing, and certain other statutory duties.

MEMBERSHIP

The Board has eight members. These are elected members of Stirling Council (“the Council”) and are appointed to the Board by the Council. The Council makes arrangements for administering the licensing system for the Board and for the employment of staff for this purpose. Meetings of the Board are held in public and in venues that are fully accessible. The Board meets six times a year.

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The objectives which govern the Board’s work are found in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Gambling Act 2005 and as are follows:

Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005

- Preventing crime and disorder;
- Securing public safety;
- Preventing public nuisance;
- Protecting and improving public health; and
- Protecting children and young persons from harm.

The Gambling Act 2005

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, or being used to support crime;
- Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way; and
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

CURRENT POLICIES

The Board operates within the following framework documents:

- The Board's Statement of Licensing Policy in terms of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, which was approved on 23 October 2018; and
- The Board's Statement of Terms of Licensing Principles in terms of the Gambling Act 2005, which was approved on 29 November 2018.

MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY

Consistent with the approach adopted by the Council, the Board considers that equality is most consistently and effectively achieved when it is genuinely part of an organisation's culture, behaviour, practices and structures, that is, mainstreamed within routine operations. The Board recognises that effective mainstreaming of equality requires its integration into both the activities of an organisation and the way in which these are undertaken.

Under the Equality Act 2010, the Board is required to publish a report on progress made in integrating the public sector equality duty into the Board's activities and functions. This must show how mainstreaming equality has helped the Board achieve the key aspects of the equality duty:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

CURRENT PRACTICE

There are a number of measures already existing in the processing and enforcement of licensing applications which relate to the equality duty. Examples include:

- Flexibility in the use of venues for meetings with service users.
- Board meetings are held in the Council Chambers in Old Viewforth, which is accessible for wheelchair users and has a hearing loop system. (During the coronavirus pandemic, while face-to-face meetings are not possible for public health reasons, Board meetings are being held remotely and are recorded for subsequent viewing by the public on the Council's social media platforms. Applicants and objectors are invited to attend hearings virtually using conference call facilities or to submit written representations.)
- Provision of language support for applicants is available and publicised and use is made of interpretation services enabling an open and transparent process for determining applications.

- A public access register of applications is maintained on the internet for public inspection.
- Applicants and objectors to applications are supported and assisted through the provision of guidance in a variety of formats. Electronic submission of applications is promoted.
- The Board maintains a publication scheme under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and operates a complaints procedure which can be used by service users.
- Information is offered in a variety of formats and service users can request meetings with licensing officers where required.

FUTURE ACTION

The Board intends to adopt the same equality principles as the Council, which are:

- Remove or minimise disadvantage for our most vulnerable citizens and communities.
- Ensure quality is integral to our decision making
- Respond effectively to equality issues on behalf of our citizens, communities and employees
- Ensure equality considerations are integral to our planning, development and review activity.
- Develop policies and practices based on evidence, including information obtained through engagement with local communities.

DECISION MAKING

The Board uses the Council's Equality Impact Assessment procedures where reports on policy are presented to the Board. The Board intends to develop these procedures in line with those adopted by the Council so that policies and procedures of the Board are assessed appropriately.

TRAINING AND AWARENESS

The staff in the Licensing Team are Council employees. These officers have been briefed and trained in diversity issues.

The Board will take advantage of the development of training programmes on equality issues for elected members, officers of the Council and members of the Local Licensing Forum.

EMPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Staff employed to deliver the Board's functions are covered by the employment policies of the Council on recruitment, selection, development and flexible working opportunities. The Council's policies on harassment, equal opportunities, and maternity and paternity also apply.

CONCLUSION

This report demonstrates progress by the Board in mainstreaming equality into their work but also recognises the need for this to be continued and developed.

In recognition of the need to continue to mainstream equality into its operations the Board will:

- Use Council guidance to assess policy and ensure that relevant staff are trained in carrying out equality impact assessments.
- When undertaking public consultation, consider different methods for consultation and ensure that an inclusive approach is taken.
- Maintain staff training and awareness.