

Tim Whelan
Director of Service Delivery
Lewes District Council & Eastbourne Borough Council
1 Grove Road
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Response to the Eastbourne Licensing Strategy 2019-2024

Dear Tim,

Recently, the Eastbourne *unLtd* Chamber of Commerce met and agreed to form a group focused on considering the opportunities afforded by the night-time economy. Our group consists of Shoe Simes (The Eagle and Dew Drop Inn), Heidi Lane (Crown and Anchor), Natalie Lennol (The Lamb Inn) and Lisa Cartwell (The Pilot Inn).

The group has since met twice, and we have started to develop a plan to consider how Eastbourne can improve and enhance the night-time economy which generates £66bn annually for the UK¹ and employs 1.3m people. A recent Guardian report² showed that whereas other towns have increased their 'experience economy' Eastbourne has lost 8 bars and pubs in five years – more than any other town.

Whilst we are still in our early stages, we do have several comments with regards to the draft licensing strategy. As we develop further understanding of best practice, we would welcome the opportunity to speak to licensing officers, Councillors and the licensing committee about the steps other authorities and licensee holders are taking in their areas to promote a vibrant night time economy.

Whilst we welcome that Eastbourne Borough Council recognise the need for more cultural events and activities, it is disappointing that little mention is made throughout the report of the benefits of a vibrant night time economy. Normally, a vibrant night time economy is a sign that a town is prosperous and affluent and brings a huge benefit to the tourism sector.

¹ Building a Night Time Economy, LGIU, 2016

² <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/ng-interactive/2019/jan/30/high-street-crisis-town-centres-lose-8-of-shops-in-five-years>

Section 4.0 lists the local features and characteristics of the town and indeed mentions that a 10 year strategy is in place for a tourism. However, there is no mention in the report of how the Council will work with partners to promote a vibrant night time economy. With the recent reopening of the Beacon, Congress Theatre and Devonshire Quarter and the new cinema it is vital that the night time economy compliments the offering, allowing holiday makers and visitors an opportunity to stay later and use the facilities.

We would like to see the report talk positively about the importance of licensed premises and the role that they play in a community. People are getting more and more insular, and pubs provide a hub for the community, improving social interaction as well as jobs and a cultural offering.

We would like the report to comment on how locally Councils and residents are working together to protect licensed premises and that it is poor licensees that damage the community, not the pub or premises. In our opinion, long term establishments that have been in the community for 100+ years should have the same protections afforded to them as theatres.

Whilst the report focuses on the importance of culture, pubs and clubs are often the grass roots of a successful talent, performing comedy, music and entertainment. Indeed, these activities can often help reduce the instances of anti-social behaviour and alcohol intake.³ Too often however, establishments are penalised by disgruntled residents who make noise complaints. Licensing should have a pragmatic, and practical approach, engaging with the local stakeholders and ensuring equality - that residents views are not held above those of the business owners. We have to acknowledge that people's habits are changing, and that we are a 24/7 society.

Bars, clubs and pubs should be encouraged and supported to hold late night events at their premises. Research has shown that a busy, thriving night time economy and associated support and infrastructure will aid in reducing incidents of anti-social behaviour, pre-loading and alcohol abuse⁴. Yet here in Eastbourne, our experience has been that the risk of running a live event from complaints by neighbours living nearby outweighs the benefits and will continue to deter licensed premises from operating.

We would also like serious consideration given to the validity of the CIP and the evidence used. We are concerned that the CIP and guidance given can deter potential business investors from investing in the town as the restrictions on gaining a licence are prohibitive. We also would like to see a breakdown of the evidence used with regards to crime reporting – determining whether or not the anti-social behaviour suggested has arisen from sales at off-licence or on-licence premises as this is not available. We believe that a well-maintained licensed establishment, with proper licensing controls is sufficient without imposing an arbitrary ban on new properties opening,

³ Building a Night Time Economy, LGIU, 2016

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2016/jul/13/open-all-hours-24-hour-businesses-night-time-economy>

The report states that “the cumulative impact of licensed premises in this area continues to undermine the promotion of the licensing objectives” but no details are given how. Given that the CIP has been in place for some time, with apparently little effect, now is the time to reconsider its viability and usefulness.

Numerous recommendations have been made by the Local Government Information Unit and Cornerstone Solicitors⁵ on how a structured night-time economy can be realised. It talks about the importance of forward planning and partnership working. Rather than implement a CIP, we would like Eastbourne Borough Council to work in partnership with stakeholders to develop a plan for our night-time economy. A well-managed smart night time economy will make the streets feel more safe and secure. Obviously, as ever, we would be very happy to work with the local authority, statutory agencies, stakeholders and residents groups to help develop this vision for the night time economy.

Once again, our group is currently meeting to discuss what we would like to see as the future of the town’s night time economy, and we welcome the opportunity to work closely with you to help with these plans.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Lennol
General Manager
The Lamb Inn

⁵ <https://cornerstonebarristers.com/cmsAdmin/uploads/night-time-economy-final.pdf>