

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL THE LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE A
THURSDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2008 AND RECONVENED ON
WEDNESDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2008**

Councillors Demirci, Patel (Chair) and Vanier

Also Present: Councillor Haley

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTION BY
LSCA01.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>	
LSCA02.	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>None received.</p>	
LSCA03.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
LSCA04.	<p>SUMMARY OF PROCEDURE</p> <p>Noted.</p>	
LSCA05.	<p>BETTER, 32-33 GRAND PARADE N4</p> <p>The Special Licensing Sub Committee A (the Committee) was asked to consider an application to provide facilities for betting, acting as a betting intermediary or by providing other facilities for the making or accepting of bets.</p> <p>The Licensing Officer presented the report and outlined the purpose, principles to be applied and recommendations. The Officer advised the Committee of the background to the application as detailed in points 5.0 – 5.5 of the report. At section 6.0 the Committee was informed that there were no comments from the responsible authorities, however there had been a number of representations from interested parties. On pages 9-10 of the report the Officer explained a number of the mandatory and default conditions attached to every licence. The representations received from interested parties included the make up of the area in terms of the close proximity to a high number of vulnerable people and the mental hospital was close the to premises.</p> <p>The Committee received a number of tabled documents and the officer explained who had submitted each of the documents. The applicants representative also tabled a further file of documents which the objectors had agreed could be submitted.</p> <p>The Committee queried the number of betting shops in Green Lanes and the Licensing Officer responded that there were currently five</p>	

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betting establishments.

The applicant's representative presented their case and advised the Committee that a great deal of reference had been made in the documents submitted to previous gambling application decisions. Any decision should be made on the merits of this application and whether Better had procedures in place against the criteria. The representative explained that the most distinguished feature of this application was that it replaced the licence granted by the Crown Court on 24 August 2007. The judgement was based on the higher standards of Better in order to make their competition address their policies. Therefore the representative was asking the Committee to replace the licence previously granted.

The applicant's represented posed several questions to Mr Bedford representative of Better. He requested Mr Bedford to give a brief history of the company. Mr Bedford explained that he had knowledge of the Green Lanes area and had been involved with the current premises for the last eighteen months. He advised that the company had 32 licenses, 23 trading shops and 9 in various stages of fitting. The average cost to fit out a shop was £275k.

Mr Bedford further stated that the incidents raised in some of the representations would not happen in Better shops. Better had researched into the local area, had a good working relationship with the community police and attended community meetings. The applicant's representative questioned Mr Bedford on a number of scenarios which could happen in a betting shop and asked how Better would deal with them. In response Mr Bedford stated that customers would be barred from the shop and that all Better shops had two members of staff on duty at all times who were trained to deal with such incidents. All shops had CCTV, a minimum of six in all offices with one located in the door frame at the request of the Metropolitan Police.

The applicant's representative took the Committee through the Better training manual page 7, sections 4.5 – 4.6 and page 25, section 12.10 was read. Mr Bedford advised the Committee that all staff were given a handbook and taken through the Gamcare training programme. Staff were extensively trained on how to deal with problem gambling.

Mr Bedford further informed the Committee that an Open day was arranged on 5 December 2007 from 12 noon until 8:00pm, because of the weight of objections received from the local community. Objectors were asked to come and meet representatives of Better in person who then demonstrated how the shops operated.

The Committee questioned Mr Bedford on the locality of two mental health institutions near the premises. Mr Bedford responded that in actual fact St Ann's hospital was not that near to the premises and that there were Corals' Ladbrokes and William Hill shops on the door step of St Ann's and a William Hill shop all located nearer than the Better premises. In respect of the letter received from Inspector Pyles, this

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was only received on the day of the meeting and was not aware that St Ann's had previously made any objections to the licensing application.

The objectors questioned Mr Bedford on the hardware to be installed in the premises particularly fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) which was shown had increased addictive gambling. Mr Bedford informed the Committee that they intended to install the maximum number of four allowed in any one shop. Mr Bedford was further questioned about betting exchanges and in response confirmed that a betting exchange terminal would be in place at the premises to allow customers to bet with each other. Currently there were two in one shop and one in most of their other shops. The pattern of use was low between 20 – 30 betting slips issued on average per day.

Cllr Haley enquired of Mr Bedford how customers could complain and whether Better had a complaints policy. Mr Bedford outlined that complaints were covered in the rules and the procedure followed when a complaint was received by the manager of a shop: Initially complaints were dealt with by the manager of the shop, if not resolved at this stage then passed to a senior manager and then onto IBAS.

At 9:30pm the Committee was requested whether they wished to suspend Standing Orders. The Committee decided to adjourn the meeting until a future date. At the next meeting the Committee would resume with questions to the applicant's representative from (Mr Lorimer and then Mr Flouch) interested parties.

The meeting reconvened on Wednesday 20 February 2008.

Cllr Haley requested the opportunity to make his representations and summary at the start of the meeting as he had another Council meeting to attend. The Committee enquired of the applicant whether they had any objections to the variation of the order of the procedures. The applicant had no objections to this request.

Cllr Haley addressed the Committee and explained that his comments were general in purpose in terms of the over exposure of betting establishments in Green Lanes. It was believed that further betting shops would bring anti-social behaviour to the area and that betting offices target poor area in the London boroughs. The applicant had stated they would offer a higher quality of environment than any other betting establishment in Green Lanes which would encourage people to stay in the premises as well as offering free tea and coffee. They would therefore be inviting vulnerable people into their premises and it was difficult to know whether a person was suffering from a mental illness or not. These people could be taken advantage of when offered allowed to sit in betting shops all day. The Green Lanes area of Haringey had seen gang fights and shootings and since 2002 the community had worked hard to build a stable community and this application seemed to be over exposure of the number of betting offices in the area.

The objectors resumed their questioning of the applicants and enquired

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what was Better's policy if they expected a customer of being a problem gambler. The applicant replied that all their staff were fully trained on how to approach, assess and recognise problem gamblers. They offered self exclusion via Gamcare or Count me out programmes. There were other processes supplied within their offices which educated people on how to gamble successfully and carefully so that they did not become problem gamblers. The objector further queried whether Better was in receipt of any awards for customer services or the Investor in People Award. The applicant responded that Better had been in existence for two years and were not yet involved in award schemes.

The Committee received representations from objectors who advised that a number of letters opposed to this application had been received from: MPs, Local Ward Councillors, the Executive Member for Crime and Community Safety, Local Sergeants from St Ann's and Haringay Ward and a petition with a total of 223 signatures from local residents. In essence a wide varied cross section of the community were opposed to this application on two of the criteria: crime and disorder and protection of children and vulnerable people from harm.

The objector advised the Committee of the recent history of Green Lanes and the violent outbreak in 2002 where gun fire and knife fights concluded with the death and injuries to several people and which led to the Green Lanes Strategy Group being established to turn Green Lanes into a stable community. Concern was raised that an over exposure of betting shops in Green Lanes would over turn the hard work and improvements achieved in the area. There were a large number of Cafes and Social Clubs offering gambling with 50 slot machines in Green Lanes. The figures provided by the police demonstrated that they dealt with high levels of crime in betting shops in Green Lanes. Given these figures if the number of betting shops were increased there would be increased risk of crime.

In respect of protection of children and other vulnerable people from harm the application premises were near to three primary schools with over a 1000 pupils. There were currently a large proportion of vulnerable adults living in the location due to the close proximity of St Ann's mental hospital. A number of cases had recently been reported in Green Lanes of people who were problem gamblers, betting and committing crime to feed their addiction. A new clinic was due to open shortly in Burgoyne Road offering facilities for mental health care for children and young adults. Local residents and parents did not want children and vulnerable adults exposed to further betting establishments in Green Lanes and these would increase their vulnerability. The NHS survey of January 2007, concluded that the Gambling Act 2005, enhanced gambling and had an impact on the prevalence of problem gambling. Haringey was recorded as the 13th most deprived area in England. Haringey had the highest number of people with mental health illness who were three times more likely to be in debt and out of a job.

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The Objectors took the opportunity to remind the Committee of the Gambling Commission's guidance that the Committee could take into account the number of premises in an area and if it was felt they would increase crime and disorder. The applicants had not provided, or insufficient evidence had been provided on how they proposed to meet the licensing objectives. The evidence provided to oppose that application was strong and primarily focused on the direct impact further betting shops would have on members of the public.

There were no questions asked of the objectors.

The Objectors summed up their case stating that they were concerned if the application was granted it would be a sad day for the children, young adults and local residents who lived, worked and used Green Lanes. Plenty of expert, factual and statistical evidence had been supplied on the impact that these premises would have, the link between gambling and criminal activities in Green Lanes. There would be an increase in the risk of crime in the area and the Committee had been presented with enough evidence to refuse this application.

The applicant's representative summed up by reminding the Committee that if there was an area with problems caused by licensed establishments then those licenses could be reviewed and revoked. The Committee had heard that to date that there had been 24 incidents of damage to machines in betting shops: Ladbrokes 8, William Hill 10 and Corals 16, this demonstrated that different establishments had different standards. Better to date has only had one, Better were the best of the bunch and referred the Committee to Dr Cassidy's letter. Better had also gone one step further by subscribing to Count me out; William Hill, Ladbrokes and Corals refused to join. Better were an operator with an impeccable track record who did things a whole lot better as they had measures in place to reasonably meet the licensing objectives.

RESOLVED

That the Special Licensing Sub Committee 'A' (the Committee) reject the application.

The application was not reasonably consistent with the Licensing Objectives:

- a). Preventing gambling from becoming a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder, or being used to support crime.

And

- c) Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

The Committee's decision in relation to objective a) was based on the evidence presented from local residents and the community at large in relation to the association of gambling in the Green Lanes area with

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high levels of crime as evidenced by the statistics obtained from the police and other betting establishments.


The Committee took into account the levels of crime and disorder in this location, crime would likely be increased as a result if another betting establishment were introduced in the area. In particular the application would introduce a combination of gambling machines in the form of fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) and a betting exchange. Evidence presented detailed that these were highly addictive forms of gambling in shops and the evidence provided linked these two forms of gambling to crime.

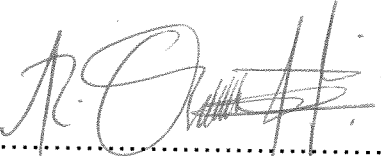
The Committee's decision in relation to objective c) was based on the evidence presented from local residents that the application premises would be in close proximity to numerous facilities for the treatment of vulnerable people, in particular mental health patients. The Committee was not satisfied with the applicant's proposed measures for identifying mental health patients or problem gamblers.

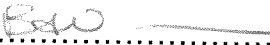
The premises were located in a predominantly residential area and the locality has a diverse vulnerable ethnic minority population which would be at risk to over exposure of gambling.

The Committee did not consider that any conditions it could impose would overcome these objections.

Meeting ended at 11:00pm.


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Councillor Jayanti Patel
Chair, Licensing Sub Committee A


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Councillor Ali Demirci
Member of the Licensing Sub Committee A


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Councillor Bernice Vanier
Member of the Licensing Sub Committee A