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**By email only**

15 January 2023

Dear Committee Members,

As the Minister of State with responsibility for alcohol licensing, I am writing to you in relation to the important work undertaken by local licensing committees, training provision for licensing practitioners, and how licensing committees work with local planning regimes.

As you will undoubtedly appreciate, well considered licensing and planning decisions are vital to ensuring our public spaces can thrive and prosper. These decisions form a crucial part of local endeavours to create safe and welcoming night-time economies. Investing in local economies and public spaces is even more important as we continue the journey of recovery from the unprecedented global pandemic.

While decision making in these areas is quite rightly made at local level, the Government continues to support ongoing local and national activity to create vibrant public spaces. We particularly wanted to highlight activity linked to two issues that have been the subject of ongoing post-legislative scrutiny of the Licensing Act 2003 by the House of Lords. These relate to the provision of training for licensing practitioners, and the collaboration between local licensing and planning regimes.

Earlier this year, the Government convened two workshops on these matters, bringing together practitioners, other experts and civil servants to consider how we can build on, and continue to support, the strong foundations and good practice that exist in many local areas already. We are all aware that there is more that can be done to make collaboration between the two regimes more effective in order to save problems – and costs – from impacting local resources further down the line. As such, in order to continue to facilitate ongoing discussions, we have further established two small virtual groups with expert stakeholders to enable these conversations to continue.

The Government also intends to:

- further strengthen the section 182 Guidance that accompanies the Licensing Act 2003 by providing detailed advice on practical ways that local licensing and planning regimes can collaborate;
- explore how to provide further support for applicants on the importance of early identification of potential difficulties across the two regimes when making a licensing application, including clarification on the agent of change principle and what it means in practical terms for licensing applicants;
- consider whether the licensing application proforma would benefit from an additional question on potential planning requirements; and
- continue to explore possible ways of unifying pavement and off-sales licence applications.

We ask that you support this work by ensuring that all relevant local licensing officials have suitable training on matters of licensing and planning, including on the overall regimes and how the two regimes interact. We do not intend to mandate for a minimum standard or mandatory licensing training requirement - all local areas should be able to make their own decisions on what training is most valuable and necessary for their particular local needs, but we do encourage all areas to ensure that their local package is substantive. The Government will continue to support this by disseminating good practice and signposting new and updated training materials produced at a local level.

In addition, we encourage you to explore all options available to you to improve local collaboration. This may include considering opportunities to co-locate planning and licensing teams, maximising the role of planning as a responsible authority under the Licensing Act 2003, as well as continuing to engage with local residents and identify ways to support them in presenting any concerns about applications to licensing committees and how they interact with planning requirements.

Thank you for your important work that you do.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Philp', is centered on the page.

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