

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

MINUTES of the meeting of the LICENSING COMMITTEE, which was open to the press and public held on TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2023 at 7pm and held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Present

Councillor Wise (Chair) Councillor Anifowose (Vice-Chair) Councillors, Howard, Huynh, Jackson, Shrivastava and Warner.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, Brown and Kestner

Also Present

Charlie Kenny– Lawyer
David Curtis - Safer Communities Operation Manager
Clare Chown – Safer Communities Officer
Clare Weaser – Committee Officer

Jenningsbet 80-82 Deptford High Street SE8 4RT

Applicant

Andrew Woods – Representing the applicant.
Mr Jowett – Jenningsbet

Respondents

1. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 6 September be considered at the next meeting of this Committee.

2. Declarations of Interests

None.

3. Jenningsbet - 80-82 Deptford High Street SE8 4RT

- 3.1 The Chair welcomed all parties to the Licensing Committee and outlined the procedure to be followed for the meeting. The Chair then introduced those present and invited the Senior Licensing Officer to introduce the application.

Introduction

- 3.2 Ms Chown said that members were being asked to consider a premises licence application made by Betting shop Operations Limited. The premises licence application was set out in the agenda and was received and processed on 12th July 2023. The application for the premises licence was advertised in accordance with regulations and during the 28-day consultation period, 8 objections were received from members of the public. The representations were received within the specified consultation period and are not considered vexatious or frivolous.
- 3.3 Ms Chown reminded members of the steps available to them when making their decision, having considered all representations and evidence heard during the hearing.

Applicant

- 3.4 Mr Woods spoke on behalf of the applicant. He said that this was an application under the Gambling Act 2005, this legislation referred to considering the application in terms of the licensing objectives. Documents had been submitted on behalf of Jenningsbet which outlined how the licensing objectives would be promoted if the licence was granted.
- 3.5 Mr Woods said that Jenningsbet was a family run business and an old bookmaker. They had held up to 140 licences and there had never been an occasion when the licence objectives were not upheld. They took their obligations very seriously and was the reason why the documents submitted were very detailed.
- 3.6 Jenningsbet had an operation at 14 Deptford High Street, they knew the area well and had operated without any complaints from residents or the local authorities. Concerns raised by objectors had been considered, and none of the complaints related to any of their shops.
- 3.7 Deptford High Street previously had seven betting shops, there are now only three; there were also two adult gaming centres, but they were different establishments. No objections to the application had been received from the Police or the local authority. Jenningsbet had satisfied all the requirements under the Gambling Act. The concerns in the representations had been read. Some of the comments did not relate specifically to the Gambling Act but they had all been noted. Children would not be allowed on the premises and all the other concerns would be dealt with by the operating strategy, policies and procedures, training, and local area risk assessments.
- 3.8 Councillor Shrivastava said that Jenningsbet already operated on Deptford High Street. He asked why they wanted to open a second betting shop on the same road. Mr Woods said that Jenningsbet had been in the area for some years and was liked by customers. At the weekend, on occasions, it could be busy, and the applicant wanted another shop further away down the high street to offer the same facilities to customers.
- 3.9 Councillor Howard asked about the area assessment which referred to the closeness of schools and mental health centres to the proposed betting shop. She asked if there was an understanding of the degree to which the area was already oversubscribed by these kinds of facilities. Deptford was a deprived area, and she

could not see the justification in providing more shops where young people could develop a gambling habit. Mr Woods said that the number of these facilities on the high street had reduced. The Gambling Act did not require the justification of opening of another betting shop in the high street although Mr Woods understood why some people would wish that it was part of the Act. Jenningsbet began trading in the 60s, if there was even a suggestion that they were allowing children onto their premises, they would not be holding an operating licence. Although it was important for the business that people wanted to bet with Jenningsbet, it was equally important that staff interacted with customers. They were trained to identify potential issues because they did not want customers on their premises who were unable to make a rational decision.

- 3.10 Councillor Huynh asked whether Jenningsbet tracked the demographics of their customers in Lewisham because it was a concern to objectors that gambling disproportionately affected those on lower income and also certain ethnic groups. He also asked for confirmation that the applicant intended to align with the Gambling Commission's non mandatory but best practice ordinary codes and not just the minimum social responsibility codes.
- 3.11 Mr Woods confirmed that Jenningsbet would comply with ordinary and non discretionary social responsibility codes. The applicant was on various committees with the betting and gaming forum and attended Gambling Commission forums and all best practice initiatives were implemented. Customers' demographics would not be tracked on one visit. However, every customer in the shop was monitored. If staff had any concerns about a customer, they would interact with them following written rules. Details of some regular customers were kept, and staff would know them and would be able to track them.
- 3.12 Mr Jowett explained that the vast number of people who entered their betting shops could do so anonymously. Most staff lived near the betting shop in which they operated and over time they know their customers and interact with them. Their shops were where people meet in the afternoons, but their demographic data was not tracked. He said that there were policies in place, regarding safer gambling and those deemed to be vulnerable. Staff observed customers and their behaviour whilst gambling and were trained to interact if they were deemed to be having difficulties with gambling.
- 3.13 Mr Jowett said that all interactions were logged and registered on the company's quarterly returns to the gambling commission. Over the past two years a lot of work had been undertaken with two known gambling charities and he gave details of these charities. They provided financial support and in return, the charities provided training for staff.
- 3.14 Councillor Huynh asked for the definition of problem gambling and what the threshold was for intervening. Mr Jowett said that a trigger could be someone making several debit card transactions in quick succession or playing two machines at the same time. A member of staff would have an interaction with someone if these situations arose.
- 3.15 Councillor Warner said it was difficult to determine what problem gambling was when there was no standardised definition across the industry and when there was

no tracking. Although staff were trained to get to know their customers and would intervene if there was problem gambling, Councillor Warner considered this to be a subjective benchmark. He referred to the licence application and asked what steps the applicant would take to ensure that the application did not infringe on the three licensing objectives. He asked for a short summary of the documents submitted.

- 3.16 Mr Woods drew members attention to Jenningsbet Operating Strategy which was an attempt to deal, succinctly, with the three licensing objectives. He outlined the basic site-specific control measures and said that there were also policies, procedures, and training. He accepted that assessing customers was subjective, but it was based on many years' experience managing the shops.
- 3.17 Mr Jowett said that the Safer Communities Officer had reviewed the policies and procedures and deemed them appropriate. In recent months he had taken on a new operator's licence; all the policies and procedures were considered by the Gambling Commission, and Jenningsbet was deemed to be a suitable operation. Terms were displayed in every branch and were clear and they took their responsibilities seriously. They worked with gambling charities and supported them financially. In return, charities helped Jenningsbet to be a better operator.
- 3.18 Councillor Warner suggested that the applicant could work with local gambling charities who work with vulnerable people in Deptford because there were serious social issues in the area related to gambling. Mr Jowett outlined how the owner's daughter had worked with gambling charities and if the application was granted, they could consider working with the local charities as recommended by Councillor Warner.
- 3.19 In response to a question from the Chair about the number of staff employed in the shop, Mr Jowett said that one person would be employed in the morning and then two members of staff in the afternoon until close and there would be cleaners. If a shop was considered to be busy at a certain time, three members of staff would be on duty. Every shop was risk assessed.

3.20 There were no objectors present.

Conclusion

3.21 Mr Woods summarised as follows:

- Jenningsbet already operated in Deptford and were known to the community and local officers. There had never been any issues raised about the running of their shops, in fact the company was known for operating beyond the requirements of the Gambling Act.
- Documents submitted to this Committee, by the applicant, were important and had been developed over many years, working with charities, the Gambling Commission, Police and Licensing Authorities. These policies and practises would be implemented in the shop if the licence was granted.
- There had not been any representations made by any of the relevant authorities. The licensing officer had confirmed that she was satisfied with the application.

- Jenningsbet already operated in Deptford and the applicant understood the local area. He had noted Councillor Warner's suggestion and would contact local gambling charities and those looking after vulnerable people.

4. (Basement) 69 Deptford High Street, SE8 4AA

The Chair said that the applicant had withdrawn this application.

Members confirmed that they had been present throughout the meeting and had not lost connection.

The Chair said that a decision letter would be sent out within 5 working days, She thanked all parties for their attendance, and they left the meeting.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the Act, as amended by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (Amendments) (England) Regulations 2006 and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information:

3, Jenningsbet 80-82 Deptford High Street SE8 4RT

4. (Basement) 69 Deptford High Street, SE8 4AA

The following is a summary of the item considered in the closed part of the meeting.

3, Jenningsbet 80-82 Deptford High Street SE8 4RT

The application for a new premises licence under the Gambling Act was **GRANTED** subject to the mandatory conditions (pursuant to section 167 of the Act) **AND** the default conditions (pursuant to section 168 of the Act).

4. (Basement) 69 Deptford High Street, SE8 4AA

This application was withdrawn by the applicant.

The meeting ended at 7.45pm

Chair