

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder 16 March 2010
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager
Health & Environmental Services

BEST BAR NONE SCHEME

Purpose

1. To outline the Best Bar None awards scheme and highlight the issues surrounding the possible introduction of an approved scheme.
2. This is not a key decision.

Background

3. The Best Bar None scheme is a nationally recognised awards scheme and was first piloted in Manchester in 2003. It is now recognised as good practice by the Home Office and a number of trade organisations. It has raised the profile of well run licensed venues as safe and responsible in their management and approach to the nighttime economy. There are currently approximately 90 authorities that have successfully adopted the scheme in various formats.
4. The scheme operates by promoting and encouraging best practice and recognising those licensed premises that are well managed, achieve compliance with high standards set by the scheme and take customer safety seriously. Participation in the scheme shows a willingness by the licensed trade to set standards and to encourage other operators to follow suit. Use of such a scheme is compatible with the statutory Code of Practice for Regulators.
5. The scheme considers how establishments deal with promotion of responsible management issues including the following: -
 - (a) Capacity and security
 - (b) Drunkenness
 - (c) Disorder
 - (d) Promotion of the four licensing objectives
 - (e) Drugs
 - (f) Safety issues
 - (g) Drinks promotions
6. Applicants that meet the essential criteria receive full accreditation. Premises that offer more than the essential criteria are considered for a best in category award i.e. Best Public House, Best Restaurant, and Best Club. All successful applicants receive an accreditation certificate and a window sticker, to inform the public that the venue has met certain standards in relation to customer safety. Premises that are considered as best in category may receive a plaque to display on their premises and could receive local publicity.

Considerations

7. The Best Bar None scheme and any variation, has the potential to assist a partnership approach to licensing and safety issues within licensed premises. It helps to promote the responsible management of licensed premises by setting standards and encouraging best practice. It may also contribute to Local Area Agreement targets relating to the reduction of alcohol related crime, disorder and anti social behaviour.
8. However officers believe the Best Bar None scheme is primarily designed for premises in town or city centres where there is a concentration of premises and therefore the assessments are geared to this type of nighttime economy.
9. Any scheme would be on a voluntary basis, which to be successful, would require a commitment from the licensed trade. Achievement of the award could incur costs for the trade.
10. Although coordinated by the Licensing team, the scheme would require a partnership approach and support from the Police, Fire and Rescue and Environmental Health. Each of the partners would be required to contribute officer time to assist in assessing the licensed premises and in the judging process.
11. Each assessment will take upwards of 1 hour to complete and to conform to Best Bar None requirements should be carried out by two assessment officers to ensure consistency. At present the South Cambridgeshire District has approximately 150 Public Houses, 54 clubs and in excess of 100 Off licences therefore, if the scheme were adopted, the potential workload could be significant and may not be able to be met within existing staff resource levels. Direct financial costs would not be large.

Options

12. The Best Bar None scheme in its literal form may not suit the rural nature of South Cambridgeshire and the officer time required from South Cambridgeshire and partner organisations would probably prove restrictive. However the following alternative options may be considered:
 - (a) Consider a lesser scheme based on the Best Bar None principles and containing its essential elements with regard to adjudication and assessment. This would allow SCDC to use the Best bar None Branding.
 - (b) Consider a SCDC alone scheme (not under the Best Bar None branding) but using and adding to the existing Scores on the Doors format.

Implications

13. Financial	There will be financial implications with the introduction of any scheme. It is estimated that the introduction of a scheme would require a minimum expenditure of approximately £1,000 to cover stationery, promotion, and production of certificates/ plaques. This funding is not currently allowed for within the 2010/11 estimates.
Legal	The scheme would be voluntary
Staffing	Any scheme would increase the existing staff workloads
Risk Management	N/A
Equal Opportunities	The scheme would be open to all licensees

Consultations

14. None at this stage

Effect on Strategic Aims

15.	Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.
	Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all.
	The introduction of a scheme if done in partnership would help promote the view that premises are run in a responsible manner and assist in reducing the fear of crime and disorder emanating from licensed premises. A scheme would demonstrate a commitment in partnership with others to reduce anti social behaviour.
	Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.
	Premises that meet the standard would be demonstrating that they are run in a responsible manner that is of a benefit to the local community
	Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all.
	N/A
	Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.
	N/A

Conclusions/Summary

16. The introduction of a Best Bar None approved scheme would be reliant on a number of factors, not least the support from partnership bodies and the trade in general. Any scheme would be voluntary and therefore requires the encouragement of the trade to take part, its key purpose is one of encouraging higher standards rather than penalising poor ones.
17. Any scheme will require administrating by the Council, which will divert existing resources away from current duties. It may not be possible to meet the additional demand of the Best Bar None Scheme within the existing staff resources in SCDC.

Recommendations

18. It is recommended that: -
- (a) SCDC does not at this time introduce the Best Bar None scheme within its administrative area.
 - (b) The Portfolio Holder agrees that the benefits of a scheme are worth pursuing and requests officers in 2010/11 to investigate and report back on how a more appropriate scheme for SCDC may be introduced.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Best Bar None website ; - www.bbnuuk.com/
DCMS guidance issued under S.182 of the Licensing Act 2003

Contact Officer: Myles Bebbington – Licensing officer
Telephone: (01954) 713132
Dale Robinson – Corporate Manager Health & Environmental Services
Telephone: (01954) 713229