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LICENSING PANEL

Thursday, 15 February 2024

Present: Councillor A Hodson (Chair)

Councillors G Davies
S Bennett

131 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Licensing Act Sub-Committee were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non pecuniary interests in connection with any application on the agenda and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

132 APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES TO BE APPROVED AS A VENUE FOR CIVIL MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

The Licensing Manager presented the report of the Director of Law and Corporate services for consideration of an application for a premises to be approved as a venue for the solemnization of civil marriages and the registration of civil partnerships. The application was made by Lost Wirral Limited in respect of the upper floor of the premises at Lost Wirral, Unit 1, Claremont Buildings, Old Clatterbridge Road, Clatterbridge, CH63 4JB. Members of the Licensing Panel and officers attended a site inspection at the premises on 13 February 2024.

Members were referred to Guidance on the licensing of premises as set out in the "Registrar General's Guidance for the Approval of Premises as Venues for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships." In addition to national criteria within the guidance, it was noted that authorities can specify local requirements. The Licensing Manager reported that Wirral Borough Council's criteria for licensing premises for the solemnization of civil marriages and the registration of civil partnerships included a requirement that the premises must provide disabled access. Following receipt of the application, the premises was inspected by both a Licensing Officer and the Superintendent Registrar. Having inspected the premises the Superintendent Registrar was satisfied that both the ground floor and the upper floor were seemly and dignified venues in which to carry out the proceedings for the solemnization of civil marriages and the registration of civil partnerships. However, as it was identified that there was no provision for disabled access to the upper floor of premises, only the application for the lower floor could be granted under the Officer Scheme of Delegation. Members of the Licensing Panel were therefore asked to consider granting approval for the use of the upper floor.

The applicant informed the Panel that the premises had recently been converted into a wedding venue. The applicant explained to the Panel that the venue was a heritage status building which limited the types of building works which could be permitted. To provide access for individuals with a disability to the upper floor, the following options had been considered by the applicant. The installation of a lift was considered, however this had been discounted as there was not a suitable space within the venue for the installation of a lift without compromising the visual aesthetics of the building. The installation of a stairlift was also considered. The applicant advised the Licensing Panel that three companies had inspected the premises with a view to installing a stairlift however this was discounted due to the width of the staircase. The applicant further reported that it was their intention to offer customers the possibility of having ceremonies on the upper floor balcony within the premises, which would allow the congregation to view the proceedings from the lower floor. The applicant also noted that all guests would still have disabled access to the building as a whole, and therefore the proceedings for individual weddings could be catered for depending on the needs and requirements of guests.

Members of the Panel asked several questions relating to the capacity of the venue, the practicalities of installing disabled access to the upper floor and plans for future wedding proceedings. Having regard to the points raised, Members were satisfied that the venue as a whole had sufficient disabled access throughout the building and that weddings could be organised accordingly depending on the needs of guests in attendance so that individuals with disabilities could attend and participate in proceedings from the ground floor. It was therefore:

Resolved – That the application for the upper floor of Unit 1, Claremont Buildings, Old Clatterbridge Road, Clatterbridge, CH63 4JB for the solemnization of civil marriages and the registration of civil partnerships be approved.