

MINUTES OF LICENSING PANEL MEETING - FRIDAY, 26 JUNE 2020

Present:

Councillor Hunter (in the Chair)

Councillors

Critchley R Scott

In Attendance:

Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Support Manager

Sharon Davies, Senior Licensing Solicitor

John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

Apologies:

Councillors

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

The Licensing Panel considered the appointment of a Chairman for the meeting.

Resolved:

That Councillor Hunter be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST - LICENSING

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

3 PROCEDURE FOR THE MEETING

The Chairman explained the procedure for the meeting, including the order in which the applicant and objector would be heard and that the decision of the Panel would be communicated in writing within five-working days.

4 APPLICATION FOR A NEW BINGO PREMISES LICENCE - MERKUR SLOTS 40 ABINGDON STREET, BLACKPOOL, FY1 1DA

The Panel considered an application for a new Bingo Premises Licence at Merkur Slots, Abingdon Street, Blackpool, FY1 1DA.

The applicant, Cashino Gaming Ltd, was represented by Mr Richard Bradley, Poppleston-Allen Solicitors, and accompanied by Ms Amanda Kiernan, Head of Compliance, Cashino Gaming Limited; and Mr Andy Tipple, Head of Product, Cashino Gaming Limited.

Mr Bradley outlined the case for approving the application stating that Cashino Gaming Ltd was a large national company that would operate the site under the Merkur Slots brand. As a large company it was explained that Cashino Gaming was a recognised

MINUTES OF LICENSING PANEL MEETING - FRIDAY, 26 JUNE 2020

responsible operator that submitted an Annual Assurance Statement to the Gambling Commission, demonstrating its compliance with regulations. It was also stated that no licences held by Cashino Gaming had been the subject of a licensing review in the past. Mr Bradley also highlighted that no objections to the application had been received from statutory responsible authorities such as Lancashire Constabulary.

It was intended that the site at 40 Abingdon Street would be a combined Bingo-Slots establishment, with the focus on Bingo. This form of gambling was described as low value and typical involved low spending by customers. Mr Bradley also outlined the mitigation and processes undertaken by Cashino Gaming at its other locations to ensure that its practices addressed risks protected customers and the local community. This included a strict policy on signage and advertising that did not target young people and the layout of the location would restrict the view of the interior from the street. It was further explained that the location would be staffed at all times and that all members of staff would be trained to ensure customers were safeguarded and that positive gambling would be promoted. It was also stated that there was no proposal to operate the site twenty-four hours a day and that while no crime and disorder issues had been identified as part of the risk assessment Cashino Gaming was committed to addressing any that may arise. In conclusion Mr Bradley stated that Cashino Gaming believed that the application met the Licensing Objectives and should therefore be approved.

The Panel queried how many bingo tablets and slot machines would be installed at the site. In response Mr Tipple explained that twenty hand held Bingo tablets, 21 Cat-C Slot terminals and four Slot/Bingo Tri-Max terminals. This was described as the high street standard offered at Merkur Slot locations.

Mr Bradley added that the applicant would be happy to accept conditions if licence was approved. Specifically that there would be no pre-planned single manning after 8.00pm and that opening hours would be restricted until 1.00am or 2.00am.

Mr Paddy Whur, Woods Whur Solicitors, outlined objections to the application on behalf of Abingdon Barbeque, 44 Abingdon Street, and the Bread Basket, 55 Abingdon Street. It was stated that the objectors did not believe that adequate consideration had been given to local concerns in the development of the risk assessment supporting the application. Mr Whur expressed the view that the risk assessment was a generic one not a location specific one. He also noted that the information submitted in support of the application had incorrectly stated the site was for an Adult Gaming Centre (AGC), not Bingo. Mr Whur further detailed the concerns of the objectors that the licence's location was in an area of high crime and registered as one of the highest areas of deprivation in the country, and it did not appear either of these issues had been taken into consideration by the applicant. Although the applicant had provided details of its company policies and standards, Mr Whur stated the view that these were general statements not specific mitigation for the proposed location, such as protecting vulnerable adults and children. He also brought the Panel's attention an advert for staff for the venue that stated that lone working may take place and highlighted that a planning application for the same location was for a twenty-four hour a day operation. It was suggested that this indicated that the venue would be operated all day and would be single staffed for at least part of its operation. Mr Whur also expressed an opinion that the proposed floor plan of the venue allowed for the installation of slot machines in excess of those already outlined and that the site could accommodate up to thirty-eight slot machines, making the venue primarily for slot based

MINUTES OF LICENSING PANEL MEETING - FRIDAY, 26 JUNE 2020

gambling. Members of the Panel were also asked to note that no conditions had been offered prior to the hearing. In conclusion Mr Whur explained that the objectors did not believe that the application had addressed local concern and therefore could not be considered to have met the Licensing Objectives and should be refused.

The Panel considered that the application did not do enough to address concerns about protecting vulnerable adults and safeguarding children in the local area and therefore did not meet the Licensing Objectives. They also expressed the view that the location was in an area of high deprivation and therefore potentially unsuitable for this type of gambling establishment.

Resolved:

To refuse the application for a new bingo premises licence at Merkur Slots, Abingdon Street, Blackpool, FY1 1DA.

Chairman

(The meeting ended 11.30am)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
John Greenbank Senior Democratic Governance Adviser
Tel: 01253 477229
E-mail: john.greenbank@blackpool.gov.uk