

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

## **Procedure for Hearings – Licensing Act 2003 COVID-19**

This procedure has been drawn up to take account of the restrictions placed on the Country by the Government in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Council's move towards the holding of virtual meetings.

As a Licensing Authority we are conscious that all Hearings of this nature must be run in accordance with the rules of natural justice and that any modifications to the format of the hearing should not undermine the requirements to hold a fair hearing.

It is the Council's intention to run the Hearing as close a possible to our procedure for Hearings set out in our Statement of Licensing Policy. However, it will be necessary to make a number of specific alterations.

The Council does not intend to hold any Hearings just on the pre Hearing papers (eg applications and written representations). The Council considers that a Licensing determination based solely on written material and without the opportunity for amplification, clarification, and questions does not best serve the decision-making process.

### **The Licensing Committee**

The full Licensing Committee consists of fifteen elected Members of the Council. From this full Committee will be drawn sub-committees of three members to deal with licensing functions under the Licensing Act 2003. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee shall have the discretion to refer a matter up to a hearing of the full Licensing Committee.

### **Platform**

The Council will use Microsoft Teams for all Hearings. This platform can be accessed on a landline, mobile, laptop or tablet. The Democratic Services Officers will ensure that the meeting is set up within the Microsoft Teams platform. All parties to the Hearing will received the Notice of Hearing required by the regulations and an email invitation with specific joining instructions for Microsoft Teams.

### **Web Casting**

All Council meetings are web cast through the Council's website. This will continue to be the case during any lockdown period and will allow members of the public to listen to proceedings from their own home.

## **Connectivity Test**

The Council will require Members, officers, and all parties to the Hearing to be available for a connectivity test 30 minutes before the start of the Hearing. This is to ensure that any issues can be identified and overcome before the start of the meeting. Notes on how this test will be conducted will be sent directly to parties.

## **Technical Issues**

If during the course of the meeting, the Chairman determines any technical issues (for example, parties dropping out of the meeting or parties being unable to hear or follow proceedings etc) are compromising the integrity of the Hearing, the Chairman will have discretion to adjourn the matter to later date. The test the Chairman will use when considering any adjournment is what is best in the public interest (including the right of all parties to have a fair hearing). Any adjournment will either be to a date when technical issues can be overcome or to a date when a full hearing with all parties physically present can be held.

## **Etiquette**

In order to maximise effectiveness of the Hearing all parties should:

- Identify themselves at the start of the Hearing when asked to do so by the Chairman
- Put their webcam and microphone on mute all times other than when addressing the Committee
- Indicate that you want to speak by using the chat function
- Only address the Committee when called to do so by the Chairman

## **Committee Reports**

The Committee report and all relevant information will be posted on the Council's website at least 7 days prior to the Hearing. A link to the documents will be provided with the Notice of Hearing. The Committee report pack will be paginated and all parties should refer to this pack rather than their own bundles.

## **Late Evidence**

Parties should submit any evidence for consideration of the Committee prior to the drawing up of the Committee agenda packs. This will mean that all information in containing in one paginated bundle that can be referred to by the parties (referencing pages numbers).

Evidence submitted on the day of the hearing can only be included when all parties to the hearing agree. It will ultimately be for the members of the Committee to decide if late evidence is accepted.

## Decisions

In accordance with Hearings Regulations the Committee will make a determination at the end of the Hearing and the decision will be given within 5 working days. Some decisions are required to be given at the end of the Hearing, in this case the public meeting will resume once Members have deliberated and formed their decision.

## Officers at Hearings

- **The Committee Officer** introduces all parties and records the proceedings
- **The Legal Adviser** provides independent advice to the Members on legal matters and procedure and will draw up the decision notice.
- **The Licensing Officer** will introduce the matter and outline the application; the officer will also answer any questions Members may have.

## PROCEDURE

NOTE: If the Sub-Committee has not already elected a Chairman, that will be the first item of business.

1	<b>Chairman</b>	The Chairman will: (i) call the matter to be considered (ii) call for any declarations of interest (iii) ask all parties to introduce themselves (iv) summarise the procedure to be followed at the hearing (v) will consider any request made by a party for another person to appear at the hearing (v) will advise the parties of any maximum period of time in which it has to present its case (if a maximum is imposed this shall be equal for all parties)
2	<b>Licensing Officer</b>	Will introduce and summarise the application, highlighting areas of contention or dispute.
3	<b>Committee Members</b>	May ask questions of the Licensing Officer
4	<b>Applicant</b>	Will present his/her case, calling witnesses, as appropriate. <i>(If necessary, applicant will produce any notices required by law. Legal Adviser will draw attention to this if required.)</i>
5	<b>Responsible Authorities</b>  <b>(who have made representations)</b>	Each in turn may ask <u>questions</u> of the applicant, by way of clarification.

6	<b>Other Persons</b> <b>(who have made representations)</b>	To be invited to ask <u>questions</u> of the applicant, by way of clarification.  <i>It is normal practice for a spokesperson only to speak on behalf of a group of residents.</i>
7	<b>Committee Members</b>	Each in turn may ask <u>questions</u> of the applicant.
8	<b>Applicant</b>	May make a <u>statement</u> or ask his witnesses to clarify any matters which he feels are unclear, or may have been misunderstood.
9	<b>Responsible Authorities</b>	Will make their representations.
10	<b>Applicant</b>	Or his representative or witnesses to ask <u>questions</u> of Responsible Authorities represented at the meeting, by way of clarification.
11	<b>Other Persons</b> <b>(who have made representations)</b>	May ask <u>questions</u> of the Responsible Authorities represented at the meeting, by way of clarification.  <b>(Note: This is not the point at which they should be stating their objections.)</b>
12	<b>Committee Members</b>	May ask <u>questions</u> of the Responsible Authorities represented at the meeting
13	<b>Other Persons</b> <b>(who have made representations)</b>	The local residents who are objecting to the application will be invited <b><u>to make observations on the application</u></b> and present the bases of their objections.
14	<b>Applicant</b>	Or his representative or witnesses may ask <u>questions</u> of the Local Residents, by way of clarification.
15	<b>Committee Members</b>	May ask <u>questions</u> of the Local Residents.
16	<b>Chairman</b>	To invite both <b>Responsible Authorities</b> and <b>Local Residents</b> to make their closing addresses.
17	<b>Applicant</b>	Or his representative will <u>briefly summarise the application</u> and comment on the observations and any suggested conditions.
18	<b>Close of Public Meeting</b>	When the Chairman determines that all relevant information has been heard and no further matters are to be discussed, the public meeting will end. All parties to the hearing (including

		Licensing Officers and Responsible Authorities) will be excluded from the platform.
18	Committee	<p><u>Will retire</u> to consider the application. They will be accompanied by their Legal Advisor and the Democratic Services Officer. This means that the Members of the Committee can determine the matter in private session. And can take the opportunity to seek legal advice.</p> <p>Members will give their decision with 5 working days by the issuing of a decision notice.</p>

### **Notes**

1. The Committee can exclude members of the press and public from participation in a Hearing; any such decision will be taken on the basis that the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in the hearing, or that part of the hearing taking place in public.
2. The Chairman may require any person behaving in a disruptive manner to be excluded from the Hearing and may (a) refuse to permit that person to return, or (b) permit him/her to return only on such conditions as the authority may specify, but any such person may submit in writing any information which they would have been entitled to provide orally if they had not been required to leave.
3. Prior to the Hearing each party shall have given notification and served documentation (eg statements of witnesses or reports of experts) as required. Late representations and evidence will only be considered with the agreement of all parties.
4. Anyone entitled to be heard may be represented by any person, whether or not that person is legally qualified.
5. Hearsay will be permitted but the Sub-Committee will be reminded to give it appropriate weight.
6. Due note shall be taken of the provisions of the Hearings Regulations 2005.
7. The Chairman may, in the interests of expediency or convenience of the parties, vary the procedure from time to time, provided notice is given to the parties and the rules of natural justice are observed.

## **Summary of Procedure**

1. Chairman appointed (if this has not been done previously).
2. Chairman to call for declarations of interest and request that all parties introduce themselves.
3. Chairman summarises the procedure for the hearing
4. The Licensing Officer summarises the application
5. Applicant to present his/her case.
6. Applicant to be questioned by all parties (to clarify points only) following which, he/she can clarify any other matters which he/she feels may have been misunderstood when the application was presented.
7. Applicant to be questioned by the Committee.
8. Responsible Authorities to make their representations following which they can be questioned by all parties by way of clarification.
9. Other Persons will be invited to present the bases of their objections, following which they can be questioned by all parties by way of clarification.
10. The applicant will be invited to sum up his/her case
11. Committee/Sub-Committee withdraws to make its decision
12. Committee/Sub-Committee will provide its decision in writing