

## **Hospitality Sector Council 29 April 2025 Meeting Minutes**

### **1. Attendees**

#### **Co-Chairs:**

Gareth Thomas, Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports

Karen Jones DBE, Pioneer Hospitality

#### **Attendees:**

Minister Alex Norris, Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Local Growth

Alex Reilly (Loungers), Andy Slee (Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA)), Emma Heal (Lucky Saint), Emma McClarkin (British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA)), Jane Holbrook (Côte), Jane O'Riordan (Caravan, Flight Club, Turtle Bay), Kate Nicholls (UK Hospitality), Nick MacKenzie (Greene King), Rob Pitcher (Revolution), Sarah Warby (Nando's), Simon Emeny (Fullers), Steve Alton (British Institute of Innkeeping (BII))

#### **Officials in attendance:**

Officials from DBT, MHCLG, HMT and DCMS

#### **Apologies:**

Andy Hornby (Restaurant Group), Brian Perkins (ABinbev), Joe Carberry (Deliveroo), Nisha Katona (Mowgli), Rich McGinnis (Circus), Shamil Thakrar (Dishoom), Tim Doubleday (Burger King), Will Beckett (Hawksmoor)

### **2. Summary of actions**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>
High Streets working group to meet with Minister Norris	Members/MHCLG
Members to publicise Jargon Buster more widely	Members

### **3. Note of discussion**

#### **a) Welcome and introductory remarks**

Karen Jones welcomed members and introduced Alex Reilley as Chair of the new High Streets Working Group. Karen gave apologies for those that were unable to attend.

Karen Jones and Minister Thomas welcomed Minister Alex Norris, Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Local Growth.

Minister Thomas highlighted the recent announcement of the Licensing Taskforce and the £1.5m Hospitality Support Scheme, securing funding to support Council initiatives.

### **b) High Street discussion**

Alex Reilley provided an update from the High Streets working group, which had its first meeting. Issues raised included cleanliness of high streets, unused spaces and a lack of incentives to invest in or transform these spaces, criminality, and issues around planning.

The group is interested in learning from examples of high streets that are performing well to understand the driving force behind this. Minister Norris noted the need to work together and expressed an interest in engaging with the High Streets working group, but favoring a multi-sectoral approach.

Minister Norris highlighted the Plan for Neighbourhoods, which reforms and expands on the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme. He also pointed to work having begun on High Street Rental Auctions to help tackle vacancies.

Members raised issues around planning delays, where they saw opportunities to make small changes that would help speed up the process, suggesting a sprint process. Minister Norris welcomed a further conversation on this to go through the group's suggestions.

### **c) Licensing Taskforce**

Nick MacKenzie gave an update on the Licensing Taskforce, a group that brings together government, industry, police and local government. The group will be making recommendations to improve the licensing framework in six weeks.

### **d) HSC working group updates**

The working group chairs were invited to update the Council on their progress.

## **Innovation**

Jane O'Riordan shared that the group developed a hospitality technology jargon buster to help address barriers around technology adoption. Jane asked if members could share this with their networks.

Jane shared an update on the Hospitality Innovation Lab, which is focusing on labour productivity. The group is looking for participants and Jane will share information with members on how to get involved. Minister Thomas announced that DBT will match fund this project.

## **FBI Forum**

Emma Heal provided an update on the group's most recent meeting, where members outlined what actions they have taken since October's budget announcement. From April, these included closing sites, raising prices, cutting down on training, and reducing headcount, staff hours and opening hours.

Steve Alton shared results from a BII's members survey. He highlighted that pubs are busy, yet before April, 75% of survey respondents were either breaking even or losing money. 83% will now be reducing staff hours and shifts, 63% will be reducing staff numbers and 72% will reduce their spend with local suppliers. The survey also found that 77% of operators said their mental health is less than good, and over half of those rated their health as poor.

## **Jobs and Skills**

Kate Nicholls updated the Council on the work the group has been doing with the Department for Work and Pensions, which announced the expansion of the Hospitality Sector-Based Work Academy Programme to 26 areas across England.

The group also highlighted the suitability of the sector to roll out foundational apprenticeships.

### **e) Closing remarks and AOB**

Minister Thomas thanked members for their contributions and encouraged them to continue engaging with Government on issues such as High Streets and Business Rates.

Karen Jones thanked the Minister and members for their time.

### **Date of next meeting**

The next quarterly Council meeting is scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2025.