

Committee(s)	Dated:
Licensing	3 May 2017
Subject: Review of Safety Thirst Scheme	Public
Report of: Director of Markets and Consumer Protection	For Information
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Summary

Over the past three years the responsibility for overseeing the Corporation's Safety Thirst Scheme has fallen to the Licensing Team.

The scheme was revamped in 2014 making it far more rigorous for premises to meet the criteria. The number of applicants has steadily increased, as has the number of premises meeting the criteria which reached a total of 46 accredited premises in 2016.

The Safety Thirst scheme was reviewed to consider whether to continue with it or to replace it with a suitable national scheme.

Following the review there was insufficient evidence to show that changing schemes would be beneficial to the Corporation or the licensed premises applying to the scheme. It was therefore decided to remain with Safety Thirst for 2017 but continue to consider further enhancements and/or alternative options for 2018.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Safety Thirst Scheme originally fell within the remit of the Corporation's Safety Team but transferred to the Licensing Team in 2014. During that year the scheme was totally revamped making it more rigorous for premises to meet the

new criteria but at the same time more of an achievement for them when they do. At the same time, the scheme was linked to the Licensing Code of Practice.

2. The aim of the scheme is to promote high standards in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour while also helping to ensure a safe and pleasant environment for people to socialise.
3. The scheme was initially open to bars, pubs and clubs but amended in 2015 to make it available to the majority of premises as the scheme was then linked with the Late Night Levy and 'successful' premises qualified for a 30% reduction in the Levy fee.
4. The scheme criteria was further amended in 2016 with changes to the qualifying criteria making it possible for every licensed premises to apply.
5. Applicants are issued with a toolkit which has been designed to help them meet the criteria which was split into award categories in 2015 namely Pass, Commended and Highly Commended. In addition, an award is available to the premises which, in the opinion of the licensing audit team, is adjudged to be the 'best'.
6. All applicants receive the option of one-to-one advice from either a licensing officer or a member of the City of London Police Licensing Team.
7. In order to try and improve the scheme still further, the licensing team committed themselves to look at future options for 2017.

Review of Safety Thirst scheme

8. Having spoken with a number of stakeholders it became clear that, with the exception of discarding the scheme completely, there were only two options available. Further enhancing the Safety Thirst scheme or amalgamating the scheme with other nationally recognised schemes.

Discarding the Safety Thirst scheme

9. The scheme has continued to attract more attention since the revised format began in 2014 and has still to realise its potential. Premises that meet the scheme's criteria do not appear as red on the Licensing risk system and, although no statistical proof is available, it is generally accepted that meeting the Safety Thirst scheme criteria does help to maintain the premises at no higher than green risk.
10. The scheme is currently the only means for premises paying the late night levy to achieve a 30% discount. Irrespective of the above benefit, for this reason alone the scheme cannot be scrapped without a replacement being put in its place.

Further enhancing the Safety Thirst scheme

11. For 2017 it was proposed that the audit process would be further streamlined by, for example, making it easier for applicants to prove compliance with training

requirements. The criteria will also be enhanced to include, amongst other things, criteria on the safeguarding of children.

12. Following feedback from applicants at the 2016 awards ceremony, they too requested clear feedback as to how their particular awards were arrived at. Therefore it was intended in 2017 to provide applicants with a short report on how they can improve their rating particularly where their rating has dropped compared with previous audits.
13. In 2016 46 premises achieved the standard necessary in order to be granted a Safety Thirst award. 17 of these were passes, 7 commended and 22 highly commended (a complete list of accredited venues can be seen as Appendix 2). Final awards being scrutinised and agreed by the Licensing Liaison Panel which include Police, Fire Service, Environmental Health and Planning.
14. Finally, the Licensing Team have a 2017 objective to look at ways in which the scheme can attract more applicants particularly by securing commercial benefits for accredited premises e.g. cheaper insurance.
15. It is expected that applications will again increase in 2017 from 60 to around 80 and the number of accredited premises to increase from 46 to 60.

Other available schemes

16. The Safety Thirst review considered other national schemes. The majority were too limited in their scope e.g. Business Improvement Districts and Purple Flag Award. The most appropriate national scheme which is similar to Safety Thirst was Best Bar None.
17. Discussions have been held with the Chairman of Best Bar None and earlier this year we received a copy of the criteria that applicants to that scheme would be expected to meet.
18. Best Bar None does not appear to provide any significant benefits for premises in the City although this situation may change as the Best Bar None scheme evolves.
19. A comparison between Safety Thirst and Best Bar None can be seen as Appendix 2.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

20. There are no Corporate or Strategic implications in this report.

Implications

21. There are no direct financial or risk implications for the Corporation's services associated with this report. Costs for the operation of the Safety Thirst scheme can be met within current budget.

Conclusions

22. Discarding the current Safety Thirst scheme or changing to an alternative scheme are not currently viable options. It has been decided to remain with the Safety Thirst scheme for 2017 and adapt/enhance the scheme as outlined in this report.
23. Alternative options will continue to be monitored for 2018.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – List of 2016 accredited Safety Thirst premises.
- Appendix 2 – Comparison between Safety Thirst and Best Bar None

Background Papers

None

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