

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT

Fourth Delegated Legislation Committee

ALCOHOL LICENSING (CORONAVIRUS)  
(REGULATORY EASEMENTS) (AMENDMENT)  
REGULATIONS 2022

*Wednesday 2 November 2022*

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**Sunday 6 November 2022**

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**The Committee consisted of the following Members:**

*Chair:* MARK PRITCHARD

Abrahams, Debbie (*Oldham East and Saddleworth*)  
(Lab)  
† Colburn, Elliot (*Carshalton and Wallington*) (Con)  
† Elmore, Chris (*Ogmore*) (Lab)  
† Everitt, Ben (*Milton Keynes North*) (Con)  
Hardy, Emma (*Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle*)  
(Lab)  
† Higginbotham, Antony (*Burnley*) (Con)  
† Jones, Sarah (*Croydon Central*) (Lab)  
† Mann, Scott (*Lord Commissioner of His Majesty's*  
*Treasury*)  
† Maynard, Paul (*Blackpool North and Cleveleys*)  
(Con)

† Murray, Mrs Sheryll (*South East Cornwall*) (Con)  
† Penrose, John (*Weston-super-Mare*) (Con)  
† Philp, Chris (*Minister of State, Home Department*)  
Rimmer, Ms Marie (*St Helens South and Whiston*)  
(Lab)  
† Sambrook, Gary (*Birmingham, Northfield*) (Con)  
Spellar, John (*Warley*) (Lab)  
† Whittome, Nadia (*Nottingham East*) (Lab)  
† Wild, James (*North West Norfolk*) (Con)

Anna Kennedy-O'Brien, Paul Owen, *Committee Clerks*

† **attended the Committee**

## Fourth Delegated Legislation Committee

Wednesday 2 November 2022

[MARK PRITCHARD *in the Chair*]

### Alcohol Licensing (Coronavirus) (Regulatory Easements) (Amendment) Regulations 2022

2.30 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Department (Chris Philp):** I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the Alcohol Licensing (Coronavirus) (Regulatory Easements) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 (SI. 2022, No. 978).

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard, I think for the first time. This is a simple measure that I hope Members on both sides of the Committee will be able to support. It is part of the package of measures introduced by the Government to support the hospitality industry during and immediately after the coronavirus period. Those measures included eat out to help out, and of course the coronavirus job retention scheme, sometimes known as furlough. Some of the changes were introduced through the Business and Planning Act 2020. Those measures, which were designed to assist the hospitality sector, included making obtaining a pavement licence quicker and easier for those businesses wishing to set up on pavements. Parliament has already agreed to extend those measures, which will continue until September next year.

One of the complementary measures concerned alcohol licensing. It provided 38,000 licensed premises with a temporary off-sales permission that extended their on-sales licence so that they could sell alcohol for consumption off the premises as well as on them. It was designed to help businesses—bars and pubs particularly—that were struggling through coronavirus. Of course, we hope that coronavirus as a medical pandemic is largely behind us—although it is not completely so—but the financial implications are still with many businesses, including those in the hospitality sector. To support that sector a little further as businesses continue to recover from the coronavirus pandemic, the instrument simply extends the provisions that I described a moment ago, allowing on-licence premises to sell alcohol for consumption off the premises for a further year, until 30 September 2023. We consulted the National Police Chiefs' Council about that, and the view of the police is that the extension of off-sales licences that I have just described has not caused any increase in crime or disorder.

In terms of timeframes beyond the one year that we are debating, the Government intend to consult publicly about what the long-term arrangements might look like in England and Wales. That will happen in the course of the coming year, and be concluded in advance of 30 September next year, when this extension comes to an end. Everybody who has an interest in this—the licensed sector, local authorities, the police, the public and Members of Parliament—can express their views about how it should continue in the longer term. I hope that members of the Committee will join me in supporting this measure, which will assist pubs, bars and other hospitality outlets in all our constituencies. I commend the regulations to the Committee.

2.33 pm

**Sarah Jones** (Croydon Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. I welcome the Minister to his place. The Opposition will not oppose the extension under the regulations, just as we did not oppose the original regulations introduced last year.

As everyone will understand, and as the explanatory note explains, the regulations

“provide automatic extensions of premises licences”

following off-sales, and

“apply temporary conditions to licences where there is a pre-existing permission for off-sales, to enable those premises to operate in the same ways as those granted the new permission”.

When the original regulations were introduced, we debated whether they would have an impact on antisocial behaviour, noise and other aspects. I am pleased to hear that the Minister has spoken to the National Police Chiefs' Council and that it has not seen any increase in those crimes. I note that there has been no full impact assessment of the extension in the regulations. Has any information been gathered from other quarters about antisocial behaviour, noise or other issues that may have occurred because of the extension in the alcohol allowance?

The other question that we will probably come to next year is whether the extension might become permanent. It would be interesting to know whether the Minister thinks, as the National Police Chiefs' Council has seen no problems with it, that the provision will become something that businesses will want going forward. Obviously, that is problematic on one level, because we do not want covid laws to become permanent, but there might be a business case to be made for keeping them. I do not know whether he has had any thoughts on that yet, but we are happy to support today's regulations.

*Question put and agreed to.*

2.35 pm

*Committee rose.*