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**Thomas & Thomas E-News**

**Westminster's Sexual Entertainment Venue Licensing Policy – Worth the Wait?**

Westminster's long-awaited Sexual Entertainment Venue ("SEV") Licensing Policy has finally been published. Its release has been a long time coming, as existing striptease venues in Westminster only have until 1 April 2012 to submit their applications for a new SEV Licence.

All premises offering striptease, lap dancing or similar entertainment will require a SEV Licence. A reminder of the new regime and legislation can be found in our November 2011 E-News: [Sex in the City](#)

We responded to Westminster's SEV Policy consultation on behalf of a number of operators, many of whom were concerned about several onerous proposals. Some of these have been softened in the final policy, others have made it through the consultation process.

Headlines:

1. A presumption to grant SEV Licences within Core Hours only (22:30 Sundays, 23:30 Monday to Thursday and 00:00 Friday and Saturday). For existing operators, SEV Licence hours will *generally* be granted consistent with those enjoyed under existing Premises Licences issued under the Licensing Act 2003.
2. Restricting dancing to private areas only.
3. A quota of 25 SEV Licences in the Central Activity Zone North. A nil quota in all other Westminster localities. This effectively represents a 'status quo' of the existing numbers of venues operating in Westminster.
4. Due consideration and weight to be given to applications made by existing operators. While the legislation does not facilitate 'grandfather rights', the policy does provide some reassurances for existing operators wishing to maintain the rights enjoyed under their existing Premises Licence issued under the Licensing Act 2003.
5. The application fee for a new SEV Licence – £5,479.
6. Policy restrictions on the grant of SEV Licences in areas considered inappropriate, having regard to the character of the relevant locality. This may make applications difficult if the locality is predominantly residential, high profile retail, of historic importance or iconic in nature, or one of family entertainment or leisure, or near schools.
7. Restrictions on the provision of nude entertainment to private booths only. **This could potentially prohibit striptease entertainment on poles and/or on stage.** Standard conditions can be dis-applied from the SEV Licence, nevertheless we are considering the implications and legality of this potential restriction on behalf of several operators.

We are now taking instructions to submit SEV Licence applications in good time before the deadline on 1 April. All applications submitted before this date will be considered and determined together at the same time.

If you have any queries in respect of the above or any other matter, do contact one of the Partners:

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