

# OBJECT and Fawcett Society Press Release

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Immediate Release

## COUNCILS URGE GOVERNMENT TO PLUG HOLES IN LAP DANCING LICENSING REFORMS

Licensing officials and councillors from across the country met with MPs and Peers today to urge the Government to strengthen proposed reforms to lap dancing club licensing rules (1). Cross-party council representatives called for licensing reforms to be universally applied across England and Wales and for the removal of a frequency-based exemption. The evidence hearing was organised by OBJECT (2) and the Fawcett Society (3) in conjunction with the London Licensing Forum (4).

In response to a national campaign by the Fawcett Society and OBJECT, the Government committed to overhaul the way lap dancing clubs are licensed. But councils are criticising the proposed reforms for being too weak. They will see new controls applied to lap dancing clubs only in those areas where councils choose to adopt the reforms (5), and contain an exemption for venues hosting lap dancing less than once a month (6).

Licensing officials warned that flawed reforms would play into the hands of an industry adept at manipulating regulation and give rise to a postcode lottery in which only some local communities are given a greater say in the licensing of lap dancing venues. They also pointed out that a frequency-based exemption will create a loophole for the growing number of leisure venues turning to lap dancing or stripping nights as a 'recession revenue booster'.

All speakers (7) supported the key call that lap dancing reforms must be applied countrywide and apply to all lap dancing activities, regardless of frequency.

*The meeting was chaired by **Andrew Slaughter MP** for Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush, who said: "It is crucial the Government goes the full mile with this legislation by making it apply universally across England and Wales and removing the frequency-based exemption."*

**David Grant**, London Borough of Newham Council Licensing Manager, said:

"We fully support the legislation being mandatory. It doesn't stop local authorities coming up with their own licensing policies. It doesn't take away discretion from councils."

**Cllr Barbara Weed**, Warwick District Council, said:

"It is quite clear that residents are concerned about this issue. If the legislation is not mandatory local people won't have a voice and as a councillor I won't be able to speak up for them."

**Cllr Jeanne Lepper**, Deputy Chair of the Brighton and Hove City Council Licensing Committee, said: "We are very dismayed to see these two loopholes."

**Patrick Crowley**, Licensing Manager for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, said: "If you have exemptions like these, the legislation cannot be operated."

**Cllr Alan Laing**, London Borough of Hackney, Cabinet Member for Neighborhoods, said: "We'd like to shape our communities. Give us the legislative tools to do so."

**For more information and to request interviews please contact Sandrine Levêque (Object) on 07975 897005 / [sandrine@object.org.uk](mailto:sandrine@object.org.uk), or Kat Banyard (Fawcett Society) on 020 7253 2598 / 07775 855037 / [kat.banyard@fawcettsociety.org.uk](mailto:kat.banyard@fawcettsociety.org.uk)**

## Notes to editors

(1) The reforms will give local councils the same controls that currently apply to sex shops and sex

cinemas. Despite offering live entertainment for sexual stimulation lap dancing clubs currently require only a Premises Licence – the same licence applicable to cafes and restaurants. The reforms contained in Clause 25, Part 2 of the Policing and Crime Bill (PCB) will create a new licensing category of 'Sex Encounter Venue' which will be applicable to lap dancing venues. <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2008-09/policingandcrime.html>

(2) OBJECT is a human rights organisation which campaigns against the objectification of women in the media and popular culture. [www.object.org.uk](http://www.object.org.uk)

(3) The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading campaign for women's rights. [www.fawcettsociety.org.uk](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk)

(4) The London Licensing Forum brings together licensing officials across London's 32 local authorities.

(5) The reforms contained in Clause 25 will require adoption a new schedule to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982. Local authorities will have no requirement to adopt the schedule.

(6) Paragraph 2A(3) of Clause 25 exempts venues holding lap dancing less frequently than once a month.

(7) Speakers at the meeting included:

- Lynda Waltho MP for Stourbridge
- Andrew Slaughter MP for Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush
- Philip Kolvin QC. 2-3 Grays Inn Square Chambers, London
- Richard Langdon, Durham City Council, Legal Department
- Julian Kearsley, Blackpool Council, Executive Director of Business Services
- Sheila Roberts, London Borough of Newham Council, Licensing Manager
- David Grant, London Borough of Newham Council, Licensing Manager
- Cllr Alan Laing, London Borough of Hackney, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods
- Cllr Tracy Ismail, London Borough of Islington, Chair of Licensing Committee
- Patrick Crowley, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Licensing Manager
- Cllr Tony Owen, London Borough of Bromley, Chair of Licensing Committee
- Cllr Jeanne Lepper, Brighton and Hove City Council, Deputy Chair of Licensing Committee
- Gary O'Shea, London Borough of Hounslow, Licensing Manager
- Cllr Barbara Weed, Warwick District Council