

(CCC) University Arms to use an area of Parker's Piece

I am writing regarding the decision to allow the University Arms to use an area of Parker's Piece as an outdoor dining and drinking area. In recent years, Parker's Piece has become the regular site of a 'winter fair', and the University Arms rebuild resulted in the loss of its historic skyline with an additional floor between the corner towers, the mass of the building to the street being 'filled in'. Through the Freedom of Information Act, could you please respond to the following questions:

Why was the University Arms allowed to utilise this area of public space?

What contractual arrangements are there between the University Arms and the council regarding this public space? Please provide a copy of the agreement.

On what basis did the council consider the commercial benefit to the University Arms, and ensure that the council received reimbursement at a commercial rate?

What if any time limit is established for this activity in a public space?

Is the council concerned that this precedent may result in regular summertime applications from the University Arms to utilise this public space and, if so, what has the council put in place to ensure that this is not a precedent for future use?

Is the council concerned that other food and beverage businesses that have a frontage onto Parker's Piece, may now request similar access to Parker's Piece?

Have any of these businesses applied for similar access?

Response:

Q1 Why was the University Arms allowed to utilise this area of public space?

The UA made a request for tables and chairs to support the restaurant business when the government relaxed restrictions on takeaways only. Officers consulted Ward Councillors and the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open spaces approved the use.

Q2 What contractual arrangements are there between the University Arms and the council regarding this public space?

The City Council and University Arms have agreed a temporary one-month permission which will be reviews at the end of this period. It is the intention to conclude this review by the end of August.

Q3 Please provide a copy of the agreement.

There is currently no agreement in place other than consent by email, which includes the following conditions (extract from email)

- Initial trial should be unlicensed so there can be a review to see how this goes

before introducing alcohol into the mix.

- The council has clear reassurance that the UA will be responsible for litter and waste removal so as not to overburden the existing bins on the piece and that chairs etc would be cleared away each night.
- The UA toilets would be opened for customer use (especially if it's running past the closing times for the City Council ones)
- No fences/planters/trees/lighting etc to be added to define area to avoid cluttering the area any further
- That the UA understand that this is a response to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing in the current year rather than a longer-term arrangement
- A suitable fee is agreed for the use of the space should it extend beyond the trial period.

Q4 On what basis did the council consider the commercial benefit to the University Arms, and ensure that the council received reimbursement at a commercial rate?

At this time, the benefit was agreed on the that basis that it supports the UA and the restaurant through a pandemic.

Q5 What if any time limit is established for this activity in a public space?

The initial period is for one month and subject to a review to establish any ongoing arrangement.

Q6 Is the council concerned that this precedent may result in regular summertime applications from the University Arms to utilise this public space and, if so, what has the council put in place to ensure that this is not a precedent for future use?

Yes, the Council was concerned about precedent and will consider any request on a case by case basis. There is no requirement for the University Arms to apply for a pavement licence as it is on private land and not on the highways.

Q7 Is the council concerned that other food and beverage businesses that have a frontage onto Parker's Piece, may now request similar access to Parker's Piece?

Yes, the Council is concerned that other food and beverage businesses may make similar requests and will consider any request on a case by case basis. If a business wishes to sell alcohol they would need to apply for a Licence. If the business already has an alcohol license for on sales and they request to sell off sales, under the current regulations they will have an automatic right to do off sales.

Q8 Have any of these businesses applied for similar access?

Yes, one other business has applied, and this was declined due to the proximity of residential homes.