

LICENSING AND GAMBLING ACTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY 2026

Present: Cllrs Derek Beer (Chair), Les Fry, Jill Haynes, Jack Jeanes, Cathy Lugg, Craig Monks, Emma Parker, David Shortell, Jane Somper and Sarah Williams

Present remotely: Cllrs David Morgan and Claudia Webb

Apologies: Cllrs Louise Bown and Andrew Starr

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Lara Altree (Senior Lawyer - Regulatory), Graham Duggan (Head of Community & Public Protection), John Miles (Democratic Services Officer) and John Newcombe (Service Manager for Licensing & Community Safety)

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting):

Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer)

19. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 12th November 2025 were confirmed and signed.

20. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

21. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

22. Statement of Licensing Policy 2026-2031

Members were advised that the policy was newly adopted in 2021, having progressed through a full consultation process prior to publication. It was noted that the policy was subject to review every five years with the cumulative impact areas reviewed every three years which had been presented to Members in 2024. John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, explained that a refresh of the main policy had been undertaken, which generated a relatively low number of consultation responses. The consultation was publicised widely in accordance with the statutory requirements, resulting in eight responses in total.

One area of focus highlighted was cumulative impact in Weymouth, particularly in relation to street-based crime. Officers emphasised the need to strike a balanced approach, considering the implications of the cumulative impact area. It was

confirmed that this matter would be brought back to Members along with the anticipated changes being proposed by the Government.

Of the eight responses received, the first was from Weymouth Town Council, which highlighted the importance of licensing to economic development in the town. The response referenced the licensing objectives and John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety noted that Government was considering the introduction of a fifth objective. He proposed that the policy should not be amended at this stage, but that these matters should remain at the forefront during the next full policy review. The response also encouraged responsible retailing and the use of licence revocation only as a last resort and John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety confirmed that no policy changes were being proposed at this time.

Cllr Derek Beer emphasised the importance of maintaining a balanced approach.

Cllr Les Fry thanked Weymouth Town Council for its constructive and helpful comments, noting that the Committee wished to encourage economic growth. He welcomed the feedback provided and confirmed that officer comments would be formally taken forward.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, referred to the cumulative impact zone and late-night opening premises, noting a decrease in late-night venues and the effect on policing. He expressed concern that retention of the cumulative impact area may not be beneficial for Weymouth in terms of tourism.

Cllr Derek Beer commented that having flexibility within the policy was a useful tool, allowing the authority to adapt to changing circumstances.

Cllr Jill Haynes stated that it was not possible to please everyone and noted that Bournemouth operated within a different economy. She observed that Weymouth was more suited to families and younger people and that the Committee should not force a form of development that was not appropriate for the area.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, explained that there was a presumption that new or extensions to existing licences within the CIZ should be refused unless there was a strong justification. However, where a proposal offered a different and beneficial offering for the area, the Committee might be minded to approve it.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, referred to a second consultation response which named specific premises of concern, particularly in relation to young people and suspected drug use. He noted that drug use was a nationwide issue and that officers were working closely with the police to gather intelligence. Measures included drug testing, undercover police operations, and the use of action plans.

Cllr Les Fry raised concerns regarding Dorset having one of the highest levels of ketamine use and asked whether officers knew where it was coming from and what action was being taken.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, responded that the issue had been recognised by the public health team and acknowledged that there was a nationwide problem. He advised that it was unclear whether the use was due to Dorset's rural nature or other reasons. He confirmed that significant work was being undertaken with the police, noting that this was an ongoing issue without a simple solution.

Cllr Les Fry requested a briefing paper, stating that councillors were often asked for updates and that such a document would be a useful tool to share with concerned residents and to help raise awareness among constituents.

Graham Duggan, Head of Regulatory Services, advised that there was a current campaign being run by public health colleagues, which was performing well on social media, and confirmed that public health officers would be happy to circulate the information to Members.

Cllr David Shortell asked whether the documents referred to covered the BCP area or solely Dorset Council's area.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, confirmed that this would be taken away as an action, including the preparation of a briefing document. He referred to a third response, again relating to drug use and young people. He explained that officers engaged directly with premises of concern and, where improvements could not be achieved, enforcement action would be taken. He advised that weekly meetings were held and engagement with premises including developing action plans.

Cllr Derek Beer stressed the importance of ensuring that allegations were reviewed and substantiated through licensing officers.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, referred to a fourth response, noting poor experiences within licensed premises and engagement, and then to a response from Wareham Town Council. He referenced experience in Switzerland concerning fire safety issues. He highlighted the proactive work of fire safety teams in engaging with licensed premises regarding capacity, fire safety measures including sprinkler systems, and fire safety equipment. Proposals included joint visits and awareness training relating to flammable materials, noting that while similar late night venue fires were more common abroad than in the UK, raising awareness remained a constant challenge.

Cllr Derek Beer commented that fire safety was a very topical issue at present.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, advised that officers had ongoing conversations with premises and that whenever applications were made to building control, visits were undertaken to ensure compliance with British standards. He emphasised the importance of intelligence sharing and confirmed that licensing officers had increased their inspections.

Cllr Les Fry expressed concern that while the process existed, there appeared to be loopholes that caused concern.

Cllr Jill Haynes agreed with colleagues, expressing concern about individuals carrying out works themselves which were deemed acceptable, potentially creating further risks.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, confirmed that premises were reviewed and that officers aimed to ensure regular inspections were carried out.

Graham Duggan, Head of Regulatory Services, advised that the authority benefitted from excellent working relationships with partner agencies. He noted that incidents in Switzerland were likely to have national implications, prompting a wider review of premises in the UK. He confirmed that officers would continue to work closely with colleagues to ensure issues were addressed and that good practice was reinforced.

Cllr Les Fry welcomed the strong partnership working but reiterated concerns that premises where poor-quality works had already taken place might not yet have been identified.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, referred to another town council response requesting that notifications relating to licensing applications be formalised. He explained that town councils were already notified via email and through the online public register and that engagement was good. He advised that officers did not consider it necessary to formalise this within the policy, as current arrangements were working effectively.

Cllr Emma Parker confirmed that ward Members received weekly updates on applications as they progressed.

Cllr Les Fry suggested that liaison with ward Members provided the most effective link.

John Newcombe, Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety, confirmed that notifications were issued, including blue notices on premises and notices in local newspapers, and that ward Members and town councils were also informed.

Proposed by Cllr Derek Beer, seconded by Cllr Emma Parker.

Decision: The Committee agreed:

- 2.1 That the responses received during the consultation period attached at Appendix A are considered and the draft Licensing Policy 2021-2026 (attached as Appendix B to this report) be recommended to Council for adoption.
- 2.2 That the Service Manager for Licensing & Community Safety, in consultation with the Chairman of the Licensing and Gambling Acts

Committee, be given delegated authority to amend any identified minor typographical errors as necessary.

23. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

24. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.10 am

Chairman

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