

Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee

28 January 2026

Statement of Licensing Policy 2026-2031

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Health and Housing

Local Councillor(s): Relevant to all Dorset Council Members

Senior Leadership Team:

S Crowe, Director of Public Health & Prevention

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Statutory Authority: Licensing Authority

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council, as Licensing Authority under the Licensing Act 2003 (the Act), is required to publish a Statement of Licensing Policy (the Policy) at least every five years. The purpose of the policy statement is to define how the Council will exercise its responsibilities under the Act. The draft policy has been published for an 8 week period of public consultation.
- 1.2 There have been a total of eight responses received during the consultation period (Appendix A) and Officers have considered each of the responses and prepared responses to each of the comments received. There have been no further amendments to the Draft Policy (Appendix B) proposed as part of the consultation process.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 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.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To comply with legislative requirements
- 3.2 To ensure openness and transparency in the Council's decision making
- 3.3 To ensure that those persons affected by the policy are given the opportunity to have an input into it.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Licensing Act 2003 requires the Council, acting as the Licensing Authority under the Act, to determine and publish a Statement of Licensing Policy at least once every five years.
- 4.2 The Statement of Licensing Policy 2026-2031 can be reviewed and updated at any time during the life of the document. The council keeps the Statement of Licensing Policy under constant review and, from time to time, may commission research to inform changes to policy.
- 4.3 The Statement of Licensing Policy sets out how the council will carry out its functions under the Licensing Act 2003 with a view to promoting the licensing objectives namely:
 - The prevention of crime and disorder
 - Public safety
 - The prevention of public nuisance
 - The protection of children from harm
- 4.4 Activities regulated under the Licensing Act 2003 include:
 - The sale of alcohol
 - The supply of alcohol by or on behalf of a club, or to the order of a member of the club
 - The provision of regulated entertainment
 - The provision of late-night refreshment
- 4.5 The Statement of Licensing Policy has been prepared in line with the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003, as well as the Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003.
- 4.6 The Statement of Licensing Policy has been prepared with regard to, and sought to integrate with, the following Council strategies:
 - Dorset Council's Plan
 - Dorset Council Community Safety Plan
 - Dorset Council's Local Plan and Development Framework
 - Dorset Council's Economic Growth Strategy

- Dorset Council's General Statement of Enforcement Policy
- Dorset Council's Strategies for families and young people

- 4.7 In addition to setting out how the Licensing Authority intends to promote the licensing objectives, and the Authority's expectations of licensed premises operators and applicants, the Authority is also able to designate particular areas of stress amounting from a proliferation of licensed premises within a particular area. This specially designated area is known as a Cumulative Impact Area.
- 4.8 A Cumulative Impact Area can be integrated within a Council's Statement of Licensing Policy if it can be shown that the number or type of licence applications granted in a particular area are having a cumulative impact and this is leading to problems which are undermining the licensing objectives. There is a rebuttable presumption that any new applications, or applications to substantially alter existing permissions, will be refused unless the applicant can demonstrate to the Authority that the proposals will not add to the existing problems in the area.
- 4.9 There is currently one Cumulative Impact Area in existence, that being in the centre of Weymouth. A review of the Cumulative Impact Area was undertaken in 2024 which showed that circumstances had not changed and the CIA was therefore retained. A further review will be undertaken during 2027 in line with the three-year review cycle.
- 4.10 It is therefore proposed to retain the existing Cumulative Impact Area from the previous Statement of Licensing Policy 2021-26.
- 4.11 There have been a number of minor amendments to the Policy however the Government is currently consulting on some major amendments to the Licensing Act 2003 and once those proposals have been finalised it is anticipated that a major refresh of the Policy will need to be undertaken during the next 18-24 months.
- 4.12 The public consultation took place for a period of 8 weeks from 17 Nov 2025 to 11 Jan 2026. The consultation included consulting with and considering the views of a wide range of people and organisations including:
- Representatives of local business
 - Local residents and their representatives
 - Local Councillors
 - Parish and town councils
 - Local members of parliament
 - Representatives of existing licence holders including
 - The responsible authorities namely:
 - Dorset Police
 - Dorset Fire and Rescue Service
 - Dorset Council – Public Health & Prevention
 - Dorset Council – Environmental Health
 - Dorset Council – Planning Authority

- Dorset Council – Children’s Services, Social Care and Health
- Dorset Council - Trading Standards
- Secretary of State (Home Office Immigration Enforcement)
- Charitable organisations that deal with the social impact of alcohol misuse
- Other charitable organisations
- Adjoining Councils
- The British Beer and Pub Association
- UK Hospitality
- The British Institute of Innkeeping
- CAMRA
- Licensing solicitors

4.13 Following the period of consultation officers have analysed the responses and have responded to the comments received within the consultation report at Appendix A.

4.14 The comments received in summary;

- A request to consider adding in additional information relating to the positives that the licensing regime brings to the Dorset Council area.
- Intelligence relating to alleged drug use and abuse or violence in specific venues.
- A concern relating to capacity limits in venues.
- A request to formalise current practices around application notifications.

4.15 Officers have carefully considered the responses received during the consultation and have provided feedback on each of the responses within the consultation report at Appendix A. Officers have not recommended any further amendments to the policy at this time however wish to seek the views of the Committee on the responses received and the recommended response.

4.16 The final draft Policy attached at Appendix B is therefore for committee to recommend to Council for adoption, subject to any further amendments that the Committee feel are appropriate.

5 Alternative options considered

5.1 The Council is legally required to have a policy in force and to review the policy every 5 years. A policy must be in force for applications to be processed and decisions to be lawful.

6 Legal considerations

6.1 There are no additional legal considerations.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The funding for the preparation and consultation of the draft statement of licensing policy will come from existing budgets and there are no further financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 There are no implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report in terms of meeting the Council's climate change obligations.

9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 There are health and wellbeing implications arising from the supply and sale of alcohol within Dorset. It is important that a robust and equitable scheme of licensing is in place in order to effectively regulate licensed operators. Dorset Council Public Health and Prevention Directorate will be consulted on the draft policy and have input where appropriate.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 There are no additional implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report in terms of impacts on other service areas within the Council.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

- 12.1 The Equalities Impact Assessment which was previously prepared in 2020 is attached as Appendix B to this report. The assessment has been reviewed during the consultation period and an updated version is attached at Appendix C.

13. Appendices

Appendix A Consultation report and response notation
Appendix B Draft Statement of Licensing Policy 2026-2031
Appendix C Equalities Impact Assessment

14. Background papers

Licensing Act 2003
Revised guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003

15 Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)