

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
LICENSING COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH
2025, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Connolly (Chair)
Councillors S Bull, N Cox, T Deffley, G Hill,
S Marlow, C Redfern, V Smith, R Townsend
and J Wyllie

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
Erica Gant	- Licensing Enforcement Officer
Oliver Rawlings	- Service Manager – Licensing and Enforcement
Paul Thomas-Jones	- Service Manager – Environmental Health

395 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Dunlop.

396 MINUTES - 22 OCTOBER 2024

It was moved by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor Deffley that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken the motion was declared CARRIED. It was

noted that Councillors Cox and Wyllie abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

397 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, and reminded participants to use their microphones when speaking so that they could be heard on the webcast.

398 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

399 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REGULATED AND LICENCED ACTIVITIES PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Service Manager (Environmental Health) introduced the report which gave an update on the activities of the Environmental Health Department - including the progress of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) action plan.

The Service Manager (Environmental Health) referred to page 15 of the report which gave a summary of the licences issued by Environmental Health. He said that the overall number had remained static, but that there had been a rise in the number of skin piercing licences and a drop in the number of food premises licences.

The Service Manager (Environmental Health) said that of the 21 actions within the FSA plan, 12 were now completed, 6 were on track for completion within the target time, 2 remained delayed and the 1 missed action was now achieved. He said that the amount of work done was hard to put into context, but only 19 of the 229 new business which required inspection were outstanding. He

added that category A, B and C premises inspections were up to date, with category D inspections down from 200 to 16 – which would be completed by the summer, ahead of target.

The Chair thanked the Service Manager (Environmental Health) for the report.

Councillor Deffley referred to paragraph 4.4 of the report, and asked if the use of temporary contractors was more expensive.

The Service Manager (Environmental Health) said that the use of temporary contractors was more expensive, but the vacancies within Environmental Health had offset most of these costs. He said that the use of temporary staff had been agreed by Leadership Team and the retention and recruitment of staff was being looked at.

The Chair said that there had been good progress made, and asked how much time was spent by Environmental Health investigating complaints made by members of the public.

The Service Manager (Environmental Health) said that with regards to food premises complaints there was an ebb and flow, with premises broadly compliant and of no risk to the public. He said that more time was spent completing proactive inspections.

It was moved by Councillor Cox and seconded by Councillor Bull that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the performance of Environmental Health with regards to regulated and licenced activities pertaining to food premises be considered and scrutinised and any comments

passed on to the Executive Member for Wellbeing for consideration; and

(B) that the performance of other activities regulated and licenced activities by Environmental Health be considered and that any comments be passed on to the Executive Member for Wellbeing for consideration.

400 REVIEW OF LICENSING ACTIVITY FOR QUARTERS 1, 2, AND 3 OF 2024-25 FINANCIAL YEAR

The Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement) introduced the report and apologised for the typing error at paragraph 2.2. He clarified that the data was drawn from quarters 1, 2 and 3 of the year covering 1 April 2024 – 31 December 2024.

The Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement) said that there were 3 vacant posts within the Licensing Department from quarter 1 until quarter 3. He said that due to these vacancies work during this period had been concentrated on statutory duties, but as per paragraph 3.18 all performance indicators had been met.

The Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement) said that as requested by Members, details of complaints, split into 4 categories, were included within the report. He referred to Appendix A which gave performance data for the period and drew Members attention to the table as seen on page 49 of the report, adding that the total number of premises licences had increased from last year, and that the number of Hackney Carriages had dropped to 180 (which was 30 below the limit of 210).

The Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement) said that the drop in Hackney Carriage licences was due to people leaving the trade, and that the Licensing Department were about to commence a round of

licensing applications to see if there was interest in applicants licensing new vehicles. He said that vehicles would be scored on merit, with higher scores (and therefore a precedence for plates) awarded to vehicles which were wheelchair accessible, fully electric, and newer and greener.

The Chair thanked the Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement) for the report.

Councillor Deffley asked if the vehicles which scored more highly were more expensive, and if this could therefore exclude some applicants.

The Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement) said that the scheme was promoted and intended to be competitive, with the best vehicles making up the fleet.

Councillor Townsend said that the application process found the best vehicles and did not look at driver suitability. He asked for further information about driver suitability.

The Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement) said that drivers were licenced under a separate process where their suitability was checked. He said that a licenced vehicle owner did not have to be a driver.

Councillor Smith said that the complaint detail within the report was both interesting and useful.

The Chair agreed with Councillor Smith, adding that it was also interesting to see which other agencies the Licensing Department dealt with. She referred to paragraph 3.7 of the report and said that the department's enforcement work was much appreciated as this was of real concern for residents. She asked if work was done towards having good relationships with licence holders.

The Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement) said that enforcement was always the last option, with the emphasis being on compliance.

Councillor Townsend asked if as the department was now fully staffed, there was any schedule for dealing with the backlog of pavement licenses.

The Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement) said that the team had been tasked with contacting all premises which had pavement furniture, with priority to be given with those who were affecting accessibility. He said that the scheme and fees for pavement licence non-compliance had now been set up, with work to start with regards to this from April 2025.

It was moved by Councillor Wyllie and seconded by Councillor Hill that the recommendations, as detailed, be approved. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that a) the Licensing activity from the first, second and third quarters of the 2024-25 financial year be reviewed and commented on.

401 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm

Chairman
Date

