

Cheltenham Borough Council Licensing Sub-Committee - Miscellaneous Minutes

Meeting date: 5 November 2025

Meeting 18:00 – 19:40

In attendance:

Councillors:

Angie Boyes, Dr Helen Pemberton, Julie Sankey, Simon Wheeler and Dr Steve Steinhardt

Also in attendance:

Michelle Bignell (Licensing and Public Protection Manager) and Vikki Fennell (Senior Lawyer, One Legal)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Willingham, Councillor Steinhardt substituted for him.

2 Declarations of Interest

3 Renewal of the Sexual Entertainment Venue licence

The Licensing and Public Protection Manager introduced the report as published.

The response to a Member question was as follows:

- The dates and timings that the applicant is applying for are the same as the previous application. It was also confirmed that there were no complaints received last time the licence was issued.

The objectors who couldn't attend had their speeches read by a Democratic Services Officer, they made the following points:

- The frequency exemption means that the Council feels that it has no choice but to grant the licence.
- The committee should avoid watering down the conditions. The conditions are based on the Council's own 2020 Community Impact Statement.
- The Council is aware that females in particular feel disadvantaged by the Sexual Entertainment and the licensing of SEV's.
- It is concerning that the applicant has again requested a variation to conditions, which would mean that they can hand out flyers for the bus and used a marked vehicle to transport customers.
- Although Dream Boys events are advertised freely and it could be perceived that Eroticats are being treated differently, however there is an epidemic of male violence against women and girls not an epidemic of violence against men and boys.
- Strip clubs normalise the objectification and dehumanisation of women and girls and the Council was right to issue a policy that limits the way that these clubs are advertised.
- Some might say that there is far worse available on line, this is true but should not be used as an argument to allow strip clubs to be advertised freely.
- A request was made for the Council to continue to lobby the Home Office to remove the exemption.
- Many women avoid the town during race week due to routine harassment from drunk men.
- Turning pubs into strip clubs only reinforces objectifying women. The SEV's make the atmosphere really unpleasant and unsafe for women.
- GlosWomen have written to the Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls to request that the SEV frequency exemption be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

A supporter addressed the committee and made the following points:

- She has worked for the applicant for over a decade, starting as a performer and now as a house mother.
- She stated that she stays with the organisation as it is the only one that provides security.
- The courtesy bus plays a vital part in getting the performers home safely.
- It is a well-run, safe legal business, performers return year after year to work for them, which is an indication of how happy they are with the organisation.
- She has worked at places before under the exemption and they are nowhere near as well organised and the performers are not as well looked after.

The applicant's representative then had the opportunity to address the committee and made the following points:

- The applicant has been operating SEVs since 2010 but has been operating in this premises since 2021.

- This application is for the same plans as last time, there is no variation to the special condition that was accepted last year.
- There are no issues with the location as the venue is within the designated permitted area (DPA). The DPA is an area of a mix of night time economy venues.
- There is a history of compliance with this operator, it only operates for a limited number of days per year and has minimal impact on the locality.
- They are not asking for anything different to what they have requested previously, nothing material has changed since the initial grant.
- The bus has been mentioned in one of the representations, it has been discussed at every hearing, the bus is crucial to safe transport of performers and aids in the transport of customers, the flyers are approved annually for the bus.
- The Council is rigorous in its visiting and checking that the premises is run as it should be.
- The police also visit and there are briefings before and after the events, this would not happen if they operated under the exemption.
- One of the representations refers to research regarding violence against women, they have read the research and there is no proof that this is linked to SEV's. It is a depressing read, but the belief is that a nil cap would drive unregulated environments.
- In lots of places women do not feel safe not just in the locality of SEV's.
- With regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty the applicant does what they can, there is an equality impact assessment, they participate in many schemes and work with agencies in a transparent fashion.
- There have been no representations from the police, as the authority on crime and disorder due weight needs to be given to that.
- The applicant has an exemplary history, the races attract a huge amount of people over a few days.
- It is a lawful activity and it is better to have a licensed venue,

There were no Member questions.

The applicant's representative was then given the right to reply and made the following points:

- It is disappointing that there is no evidence that is directly related to the SEV.
- The applicant runs a tight ship, he is an open and transparent operator who is involved in the community. It is a well-run operation.

The matter then went to Member debate where Members made the following points:

- There was acknowledgement and thanks for the amount of information provided by the applicant's representative.
- It is legal and lawful to operate an SEV, there have been no objections from the police and there are no mandatory grounds to refuse the application.
- The applicant is a suitable applicant and there have been no complaints for a number of years.

- The Member had visited the venue during the races and seen the operation, had also visited the places operating under the exemption and the two places are extremely different.
- The venue is within the designated permitted area so there are no concerns with the venue.
- Pleased to see there is an equality impact statement.
- Happy with the house rules and the amount of support given to the staff.
- There was empathy for those who don't feel safe but there is no evidence that this venue can be blamed.
- These applications always receive a lot of attention, but there was hope that people are understanding that there is very little that the Council can do unless there is a change in the law.
- A lot of alcohol is consumed at the races and that is a contributory factor for people not feeling safe at that time.
- Unfair to blame one discreet business for people feeling unsafe in town.
- There is the exemption that they could operate under, but it is better to have a licenced premises.

The matter went to the vote in favour of granting the application – the vote was UNANIMOUS to grant the application as applied for.

4 Local Government Act 1972

The vote was taken on the following:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining agenda items as it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public are present there will be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 and 2, Part (1) Schedule (12A) Local Government Act 1972, namely:

Paragraph 1; Information relating to any individual

Paragraph 2; Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

The vote was unanimous and the meeting entered exempt session.

5 Review of a hackney carriage drivers licence

The Licensing Officer introduced the report.

The driver addressed the committee.

After the debate in private session the Members gave their unanimous decision to REVOKE

6 Any Other Items the Chairman Determines Urgent and Which Requires a Decision

There was one urgent matter of business that brought to the committee.

There was no report given the lateness of the issue. The Licensing Officer explained that the driver has a vehicle that is 2 months older than the policy allows. The vehicle is in good condition. It was confirmed that it was believed that the driver did not wilfully ignore the matter and although the vehicle is older than the policy states it should be it is fit for the road.

It was confirmed in response to a Member question that officers have no concerns regarding this case and that there could be better steps to ensure that driver knows that they need three licences. Although the driver should have known this since he was notified he has sought to rectify the matter as soon as possible.