

Briefing Note

Committee name: Licensing Committee

Date: 4 February 2026

Responsible officer: Licensing and Public Protection Manager

This note provides information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet or a committee but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the officer indicated.

This briefing note updates the committee on a range of licensing related issues of significance and note.

Licensing taskforce report and Government response

The committee were previously updated at September licensing committee. It is proposed that the cabinet lead and the licensing manager will carry out a review of the current statement of licensing policy soon and will consult with the licensing committee later in the year.

The licensing taskforce is a joint group between government, industry, police and local government, to make recommendations to improve the Licensing Act 2003 framework. [The taskforce concluded on 16 May 2025](#) and provided government with 10 priority recommendations to consider.

A summary of the recommendations and Government's response

1. National Licensing Policy Framework

The government supports the creation of a National Licensing Policy Framework to improve consistency and transparency across local authorities. It recognises the value of a framework that provides clear national direction while preserving local discretion and intends to consult further on how best to align licensing with broader government priorities.

2. Licence 'Amnesty'

The government agrees that a licence 'amnesty' could help modernise and streamline existing licences. It sees merit in reviewing and removing outdated or disproportionate conditions, particularly those inherited from the original implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 and will explore how best to target premises where conditions no longer reflect current operations.

3. **Longer Licensing Terms for Pavement Areas**
The government is open to extending the duration of pavement licences to give businesses greater certainty and support long-term planning. It acknowledges the benefits of stability for recurring events and will consider this recommendation as part of wider licensing reforms.
4. **Temporary Event Notice (TEN) Limits**
The government recognises the need for greater flexibility in the use of temporary event notices. It will review current limits and explore options to make the system more responsive to the needs of operators, while maintaining safeguards for public safety and local communities.
5. **Agent of Change Principle**
The government supports strengthening the agent of change principle in licensing decisions. It agrees that established venues should be protected from the impact of new developments nearby and will consider how to embed this principle more consistently across licensing and planning systems.
6. **Hospitality and Night-Time Economy Zones**
The government is interested in exploring the creation of designated hospitality and night-time economy zones. It sees potential in supporting local authorities to develop vibrant, well-managed areas that promote economic growth and cultural activity.
7. **Licence Length and Fees for Festivals**
The government acknowledges the value of reviewing licence durations and fees for festivals. It recognises the importance of providing certainty for recurring events and supporting long-term investment and will consider this area further in future reforms.
8. **Grandfathered Conditions Review**
The government agrees that reviewing grandfathered conditions is a timely and necessary step. It supports efforts to ensure that licensing conditions reflect current operational realities and do not unnecessarily constrain businesses.
9. **Licensing Data and Transparency**
The government supports improving access to licensing data to enhance transparency and accountability. It will explore how better data sharing between authorities and stakeholders can support more effective decision-making and public engagement.
10. **Licensing Training and Capacity Building**
The government acknowledges the importance of training and capacity building for licensing officers and decision-makers. It will consider how to support local authorities in developing the skills and resources needed to implement licensing policy effectively and consistently.

Relaxation of licensing hours for the Men's Football World Cup 2026

The [consultation](#) closed on 15 January 2026.

The consultation proposals were to contingently relax licensing hours for licensed premises in England and Wales for the semi-finals and the final of the FIFA Men's

Football World Cup 2026 (World Cup 2026) should any of the home nations (England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland) reach those stages.

Consultation on Category D gaming machines and licensing for bingo premises

The [consultation](#) closed on 30 January 2026.

This is a complex consultation on an already complex area of licensing. The proposals include additional sub-categories of Category D machines, increases to stakes and prizes imposing legal age limits on 'cash-out' Category D slot-style gaming and various proposals relating to bingo premises to achieve a separation between gaming machines and bingo positions with further proposals to address the machine to bingo position ratios.

Local transport authorities and the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles

[Consultation](#) closes on 1 April 2026.

This is a very significant consultation with proposals to move the responsibilities for taxi and private hire licensing away from local licensing authorities and put it with Local Transport Authorities (LTAs). The consultation argues that this would put all transport matters into the hands of LTAs '*..enabling the sector to be fully considered and integrated in local transport plans. Taxis and PHVs are an integral part of local transport networks and are particularly relied upon by those with mobility difficulties...*'

The consultation reasons that reducing the number of licensing authorities (from 263 licensing authorities currently to 70 LTAs) will:

- a) greatly improve consistency in licensing standards
- b) remove the factors that can induce a driver to license away from the area in which they intend to work
- c) increase in area working

It is proposed that a county wide response will be collated and submitted.

Animal welfare strategy for England

Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) published it's [animal welfare strategy](#) on 22 December 2025.

This sets out their aims around animal welfare. Of particular interest for licensing is the [pets and companion animals](#) area which shows plans for more activities that may require licensing in the future.

Institute of Licensing's (IoL) Partnership Charter for the Nighttime Economy

At it's national training conference in November, the IoL launched the [partnership charter](#) aiming to support collaboration among all stakeholders to assist in growing or sustaining a vibrant nighttime economy.

Any stakeholder involved in the nighttime economy is asked to commit to the vision, values and principles by formally signing the charter.

Cheltenham Borough Council signed the charter at the event, and the principles are being incorporated into our Evening and Nighttime Economy (ENTE) strategy work that will be finalised by the Spring. This will be presented to Full Council.

Purple Flag Interim Assessment

After a full assessment and receiving accreditation for the 10th year running in 2025, the interim assessment documents have been submitted for 2026.

We hope to hear in the next couple of months on the outcome.

We will update the committee on further developments on this as necessary.

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