

Cheltenham Borough Council Full Licensing Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 3 December 2025

Meeting time: 5.00 pm - 9.25 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Councillor Dr David Willingham, Councillor Dilys Barrell, Councillor Steve Harvey, Councillor Tabi Joy, Councillor Dr Helen Pemberton, Councillor Dr Steve Steinhardt, Councillor Simon Wheeler (Chair) and Councillor Barbara Clark

Also in attendance:

Vikki Fennell (Senior Lawyer, One Legal), Jacob Doleman (Licensing Officer) and Craig Daly

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Sankey and Boyes.

Councillor Willingham left the meeting after agenda item 4 due to a Mayoral engagement.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of sub-committee meetings

Meeting of the previous sub-committee meetings were approved.

4 Renewal of the Sexual Entertainment Venue Licence

The Senior Licensing Officer introduced the report as published.

The responses to Member questions were as follows:

- The application is practically the same as the application that the committee approved last year.
- The Chief Officer for Police that is referred to in the report is actually the Chief Constable.

The democratic services officer read out representation from 2 objectors, the points they made were as follows:

- 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 use 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.

Three supporters' statements were then read, they 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.
- Regulated sexual entertainment provides a greater protection for all concerned in either working at or attending Cheltenham Festivals.
- The police know the venue and the operator and work well together as they are aware that it is a safe experience for all.
- Unregulated sexual entertainment provides no protection for anybody.
- It is challenging to comprehend why anyone would consider a no rules lap dancing club to be a safer option than a licensed one.
- It is important to remind individuals that this form of entertainment is lawful, even if people disagree on moral grounds.
- Cheltenham retains the Purple Flag which shows its commitment to ensuring the safety of residents and visitors.
- Clubs that choose to diversify into this legitimate form of entertainment respond to supply and demand.

The applicant was then asked to address the committee and made the following points:

- There are no issues raised in relation to layout or character.
- With regard to the locality the premises is just outside the permitted area, it is recognised that the area is mixed use and the licence has previously been granted.
- The venue operates discreetly and within specific hours and for a limited number of days a year.
- There has been no representations from the police.
- Failure to grant the licence has a negative impact on welfare and safety, it is a lawful activity and it is better to have a licensed venue that is subject to robust policies and procedures.
- There is no difference to last year's application and it was granted last year.

The Chair suggested that the matter was debated in public to which the committee agreed.

During the debate Members made the following points:

- There was support for the SEV and would welcome more to come under the remit of the Council.
- Appreciative of the applicant working with the Council to get the best outcome.
- As the application was approved last year it would be irrational to do anything other than approve the application as there is no material difference.
- The previous Chair stated that he had visited the premises previously and those premises operating under the exemption and spoken to the performers and they are much happier operating with a licenced premises.
- Morality is not the job of the committee, safety is and granting a licence ensures safety.

- The current government are not interested in a change in the legislation, therefore the best way forward is to licence a premises.
- The police have not raised an objection, and it is the responsible authority in relation to crime and disorder, so there seems to be no reason not to grant the licence.
- It was felt to be unfortunate that none of the objectors or supporters were present to address the committee.
- The committee has been told many times that performers feel safer working in a licensed operation than under the exemption.
- Thousands of people visit Cheltenham during the races and do not know that the SEV's operate.
- Unfortunately people feel unsafe in Cheltenham during race week, is that because of the amount of people and the high levels of alcohol that are consumed rather than the operation of the SEV?

The matter then went to the vote to grant the application:

For: 7

Abstentions: 1

GRANTED

5 Local Government Act 1972

The committee then voted unanimously 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

6 Review of Hackney Carriage Drivers Licence

After the Senior Licensing Officer gave his report as published, the driver answered questions from the committee and was given the opportunity to address them.

The committee adjourned to make their decision and it was agreed that the driver should attend the relevant course to be advised of by the licensing team.

7 Review of a Private Hire Drivers Licence

The Licensing Officer introduced the report. The Members and the driver had the opportunity to ask the Licensing Officer questions. The driver then addressed the committee and responded to their questions.

The committee adjourned to make their decision and it was decided that the driver would receive a written warning.

8 Seating Capacity of a Hackney Carriage Vehicle

Prior to the Licensing Officer introducing the report, Members left the Chamber and looked at the vehicle and tried sitting 3 people in the back of the vehicle as this was the matter that was under consideration.

The Licensing Officer then introduced the report and responded to questions from both Members and the driver.

The driver was then given the opportunity to address the committee and answer their questions.

The committee adjourned for them to make their decision.

The decision was unanimous to refuse to increase the capacity of the vehicle.

9 Application to Renew a Private Hire Drivers Licence

The Licensing Officer introduced the report as published and responded to Member questions.

The applicant was then given the opportunity to address the committee and answer Member questions.

The committee adjourned to make their decision. The committee unanimously decided to refuse to renew the licence.

10 Review of previous decisions

There were none.

11 Any other items the Chairman determines urgent and requires a decision

There were none,

12 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Full Licensing Committee will be 4th March 2026.

