NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LICENSING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF ON MONDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Dave Winstanley (Chair), Amy Allen (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, Keith Hoskins, Tim Johnson, Bryony May, Alistair Willoughby and Stewart Willoughby.*

In Attendance: *Luca Benedito (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Jo Doggett (Director - Regulatory), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Joe Mannix (Licensing & Community Safety Manager).*

Also Present: *There were no members of the public present for the duration of the meeting.*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 01 minute 05 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sean Prendergast, Steven Patmore, Lisa Nash and Elizabeth Dennis.

Councillor David Barnard was absent.

2 MINUTES - 13 OCTOBER 2025

Audio recording – 01 minute 27 seconds

Councillor David Winstanley, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Amy Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 13 October 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 02 minutes 14 seconds

(1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.

(2) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

(3) The Chair advised for purposes of clarification that 4.8.23(a) of the constitution did apply to this meeting and Members were required to be present for the entirety of an Item to vote.

4 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 03 minutes 00 seconds

There was no other business notified.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 03 minutes 05 seconds

There was no public participation.

6 ANNUAL LICENSING REPORT 2025/2026

Audio recording – 03 minutes 12 seconds

The Licensing and Community Safety Manager presented the report entitled 'Annual Licensing Report 2025/26' and advised that:

- The Licensing Team currently consisted of four staff members, with recruitment underway to fill a vacant post.
- Licensing applications had reduced by approximately 17-18% compared to the previous reporting period, primarily due to a reduction in Hackney Carriage and Private Hire applications. However, the number of licences in force had remained broadly stable.
- Applications relating to skin piercing had increased by approximately 102%, whilst gambling applications had increased by approximately 23.5%.
- Animal licensing applications had reduced due to the cyclical nature of licensing renewals.
- Responsibility for Houses in Multiple Occupation licensing had transferred to the Housing Team.
- Inspection activity had remained high, with 223 inspections undertaken during the reporting period.
- Service requests continued to demonstrate positive engagement with businesses seeking advice before submitting applications.
- Work on the digital channel shift project continued, with meetings taking place with software providers to improve online application processes and reduce manual administrative work.
- The Public Licensing Register had successfully gone live, and further digital enhancements were being explored.
- The Women and Girls Safety Charter had been successfully launched, and work was underway to review and streamline the assessment process.
- Three officers had successfully obtained qualifications as Animal Welfare Inspectors.
- Opportunities to provide animal welfare inspection services to other authorities and generate income were being explored.
- Work was also being undertaken to consider opportunities for chargeable advice services where appropriate.
- National regulatory changes concerning skin piercing activities and cosmetic procedures continued to be monitored.
- New regulations relating to primate licensing had come into force, however no applications had been received within the district.
- Preparations were underway for implementations of the Protect Duty also known as, Martyn's Law, which would introduce terrorism preparedness requirements for qualifying premises and events.

The following members asked questions:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Bryony May
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Dave Winstanley

In response to questions, the Licensing and Community Safety Manager advised that:

- Information regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation inspections could be discussed with the relevant Housing Team manager to identify appropriate reporting arrangements.
- Licensing policies could be reviewed at any time, and Members were encouraged to raise any areas they wished to be considered.
- Amendments could be explored to ensure Members were notified of applications for Street Trading Consent in their Ward.
- The increasing use of Artificial Intelligence was contributing to more complex Freedom of Information requests and service enquiries, requiring additional officer time to assess and respond appropriately.
- Future inspections of scrap metal dealers would be undertaken, including opportunities for joint working with partner agencies where appropriate.
- Work was underway to further develop and promote the Women and Girls Safety Charter across the district.
- The Safety Advisory Groups (SAGS) continued to work with organisers of major events to review safety arrangements, transport plans and crowd management measures.
- Recommendations from SAGS were considered through event management planning and licence conditions where appropriate.
- Licensed premises participating in the Women and Girls Safety Charter could benefit from additional support, guidance and resources as the scheme developed.

As part of the debate Councillor Daniel Allen commented positively on feedback received from businesses operating within the night-time economy regarding the Licensing Service.

Councillor Dave Winstanley, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Amy Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

(1) Reviewed the Annual Report and its content.

(2) Noted the Annual Report.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: Section 8.2.3 of the Council Constitution requires the Full Committee to meet at least once per civic year, and section 8.2.3 (d) requires the Committee to receive an annual report on licensing activities including performance information.

The meeting closed at 8.18 pm

Chair