

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



9 October 2026

Our Ref Licensing and Regulation Committee 19
 October 2026
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillors Dave Winstanley (Chair), Amy Allen (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, David Barnard, Tina Bhartwas, Elizabeth Dennis, Keith Hoskins MBE, Tim Johnson, Bryony May, Lisa Nash, Steven Patmore, Sean Prendergast, Alistair Willoughby and Stewart Willoughby

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE LICENSING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER - DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON
ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF**

On

MONDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Isabelle Alajooz
Director – Governance

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Agenda **Part I**

Item		Page
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Members are required to notify any substitutions by midday on the day of the meeting. Late substitutions will not be accepted and Members attending as a substitute without having given the due notice will not be able to take part in the meeting.	
2.	MINUTES - 13 OCTOBER 2025 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 October 2025.	(Pages 5 - 10)
3.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect to any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or a Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.	
4.	NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chair of other business which they wish to be discussed at the end of either Part I or Part II business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chair will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.	
5.	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive petitions, comments, and questions from the public.	
6.	ANNUAL LICENSING REPORT 2025/2026 REPORT OF THE LICENSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY MANAGER	(Pages 11 - 32)
	The purpose of this report is to provide the Licensing and Regulation Committee with a summary of the work undertaken by the licensing service over the previous twelve months, an update on existing projects and an overview of future proposals.	

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LICENSING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON MONDAY, 13TH OCTOBER, 2025 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Dave Winstanley (Chair), Amy Allen (Vice-Chair), Steven Patmore, Ian Albert, Ruth Brown, Keith Hoskins, Tim Johnson, Nigel Mason, Bryony May, Sean Prendergast and Stewart Willoughby.*

In Attendance: *Steve Cobb (Licensing and Community Safety Manager), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager).*

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 01 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Barnard, Daniel Allen, Lisa Nash and Elizabeth Dennis.

2 MINUTES - 14 OCTOBER 2024, 10 MARCH 2025

Audio recording – 1 minute 21 seconds

Councillor Dave Winstanley, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 14 October 2024 and 10 March 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 24 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 – 3 minutes 08 seconds

There was no other business notified.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 3 minutes 13 seconds

There was no public participation.

6 PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL LICENSING REPORT 2024/25

Audio recording – 3 minutes 21 seconds

The Licensing and Community Safety Manager presented the report entitled 'Presentation of the Annual Licensing Report 2024/25' and advised that:

- The report covered the highlights from the work of Licensing team over the last year but did not detail every aspect of the work completed.
- The Management Support Unit continued to support the service with administrative tasks, which allowed the Licensing Officers to focus on licensing activity.
- A concert was due to be held at Knebworth House in July 2026 for Iron Maiden, which would be a large concert and would be the end of their European tour.
- If Members were interested in the preparations around a large scale event and the licensing work involved, a walk around could be provided by the team.
- Following previous comments by the Committee, the number of inspections was now much higher than previously. Whilst there does not seem to be much of an increase between 2023/24 and 2024/25, this was due to a push to inspect in 2023/24 where each premises was risk-rated and the premises with a lower risk would not be inspected again until 2026.
- The number of applications received was slightly up on previous year, but a year-by-year comparison was not always an accurate view of the situation, as it would depend on the duration of the license granted. It was more accurate to look at the number of licenses held at any one time, which, as detailed at Appendix B, there were almost 100 more licenses than the year before, which meant new businesses were opening in the district.
- There had been 76 complaints received against taxi drivers, which was a significant increase, and the number of complaints received was higher, but this figure reflected genuine complaints.
- A Taxi Trade Association meeting had taken place recently which drew attention to the increased workload created by vexatious complaints. Officers highlighted the actual cost of investigating these complaints and, if they continued at high volumes, this would be added to the license fee.
- There had only been three Licensing Sub-Committee hearings held in the past year, although these were lengthy meetings.
- The report did not always highlight the complexity of enforcement work and therefore it looked as though there had not been much activity in this area.
- However, the work around the Cats Survival Trust took a lot of Officer time in ensuring that a suitable alternative location was found to prevent the cats being euthanised. In the end, only three cats were required to be euthanised due to ill health.
- An update to the Licensing Policy was to be discussed later in this meeting.
- The Licensing team were continuing to work with the Digital Transformation team to improve the customer service, but it was important to balance this against what was appropriate and actionable.

- The Violence Against Women and Girls Safety Charter was now live in Letchworth and Hitchin, and work was ongoing with premises in Baldock and Royston.
- To support the roll out, a new video had been developed to be more user friendly and was available on the Council website.
- As part of ongoing inspections, Officers would ensure that premises who had signed up to the Charter were aware of, and enforcing, it, with most premises adhering to the policy.
- A new safeguarding policy procedure had been developed for taxi drivers, following comments from the apprentice within the team, and now required face-to-face delivery of the training with a test at the end, which must be passed.
- License plates for taxis and private hire vehicles had been updated to use recycled materials which would last the duration of the life of the vehicle.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Sean Prendergast
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Tim Johnson
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Amy Allen

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

- Previous issues with exiting the site at a Robbie Williams concert had been resolved, with around 80k in attendance for a Liam Gallagher concert which did not have the same issues. There were now separate exit routes for pedestrians, cars, taxis and coaches, with vehicles being kept separate from pedestrians.
- Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) were not risk rated in the same way as pubs and clubs. They were inspected at the start of the license and at the mid-way point of the 5 year license. Therefore, the figures provided of HMO inspections would depend on when the license was granted.
- The team had worked with the Revenues and Benefits team and the Environmental Health team at the Council to look at potential unlicensed HMOs.
- In relation to the Bygrave Plantation hearings, it was unusual to receive a variation and review for a site at the same time, and it was managed as best as possible. It was felt that the review should take place first, as there would be no variation if the license was withdrawn.
- The issue in this case related to the issuing of the decision notice from the review hearing, which meant that the variation hearing was held within the appeal period of the review. Procedures around this had since been amended to ensure that a longer period between the decision notice being issued and any further hearing was required.
- There was always a right of appeal on any licensing decision.
- Confusion over the second hearing had an impact on the decision made and was outlined as a reason for the appeal being successful. However, the majority of the decision was upheld with only minor amendments from the court.
- Ultimately, the appeal was allowed as the wording on the conditions was unclear and required tidying up, but also conditions had been added to events under 7500, which was not part of the variation and therefore deemed unacceptable.
- The recent Vape Shop closure in Royston had not been a licensing activity, as there were not licenced products involved. The work was conducted by North Herts Council Community Safety Team in partnership with Trading Standards at the County Council.
- There would be a communications campaign around the need to licence HMOs.
- There were limits to what the Council could do in relation to scrap metal, which focussed on ensuring that accurate financial records were in place at relevant sites, and that they were not dealing in cash.

- The licensing team continued to work with colleagues in the Fire department, as well as Councillors, to understand why fires happened and what can be done to educate around the dangers posed during inspections of sites.
- There had been proposed changes to the requirement to publish a licensing notice in local press, which was currently required and was included within the Policy of the Council.
- There was currently no fixed date on when the Women and Girls Safety Charter would be implemented in Royston.
- The Licensing team worked closely with the Green Space team to ensure that any land licenses granted were appropriate. Work was ongoing to ensure that procedures were in place to stop events going ahead if there was a risk to the public from that event.
- Some forms were onerous on the applicant, however these were often proscribed forms and could not be amended or simplified.
- The Licensing team would work with applicants and provide advice, in line with legislation, on TENs applications, rather than outright refusal for missing information or minor errors in the application.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Amy Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- (1) Reviewed the Annual Report and commented on 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'

7 ADOPTION OF A STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY REQUIRED BY VIRTUE OF SECTION 5 OF THE LICENSING ACT 2003

Audio recording – 1 hour 1 minute 08 seconds

The Licensing and Community Safety Manager presented the report entitled 'Adoption of a Statement of Licensing Policy Required by Virtue of Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003' and advised that:

- A new Licensing Policy was required to be considered by this Committee, before adoption by Full Council.
- The government had launched a consultation on changes to the Licensing Act, which may require a review of this proposed new Policy, but it was not expected that these would be especially onerous changes, as some of the proposals were already covered in the Policy.
- There were no significant changes proposed from the previous Policy, as it was felt that it currently worked well.
- The Council had never lost a licensing appeal and the Policy, as well as training provided, was important in maintaining this.
- A vision for licensing across the district had been included in the Policy, but many other changes were to tidy up the Policy following recent hearings.
- There was clarification on noise nuisance added, confirmation that CCTV was not required in all licensing situations and the conflict between licensing and planning policy had been resolved.
- The Policy continued to promote virtual Sub-Committee hearings as the default position, with the ability to hold in person for specific cases.
- The summarised consultation responses were included at Appendix A, alongside Officer comments, and the full responses to the consultation were included at Appendix B.

- There were no major changes to the Policy following the consultation.
- The proposed Policy was included at Appendix C.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Tim Johnson
- Councillor Ian Albert

In response to questions, the Licensing and Community Safety Manager advised that the reference to the weight applied to the contribution of the Environmental Health officer was to strike a balance between lack of formal evidence and still allowing an expert opinion to be considered. However, it was agreed that the word 'substantial' would fetter the discretion of the Committee and could be amended.

Councillor Amy Allen proposed the recommendations and Councillor Ian Albert seconded.

As part of the debate, Councillor Ruth Brown proposed an amendment to remove the final sentence from paragraph D11.10 of the Policy at Appendix C. This was seconded by Councillor Sean Prendergast.

Councillor Amy Allen confirmed, as proposer, that she would accept the amendment into the substantive motion. This was confirmed by Councillor Ian Albert, as seconder, and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- (1) Considered the responses to the public consultation.
- (2) Supported the proposed Statement of Licensing Policy attached as Appendix C, with an amendment to remove the final sentence from paragraph D11.10.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the Statement of Licensing Policy, as amended, be adopted.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL:

- (1) Licensing authorities are required to publish a policy every five years by virtue of section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 ("the Act").
- (2) A new policy must be published by 7 January 2026 to comply with this statutory requirement.
- (3) The proposed policy builds on the success of the previous and existing versions of the policy, whilst reflecting legislative changes and the Council's priorities.
- (4) Responses to the public consultation were limited and raised no significant opposition to any of the proposals.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Chair

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LICENSING & REGULATION COMMITTEE 19 OCTOBER 2026

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: ANNUAL LICENSING REPORT 2025/2026

REPORT OF: LICENSING & COMMUNITY SAFETY MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGULATORY

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES, ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Licensing and Regulation Committee with a summary of the work undertaken by the licensing service over the previous twelve months, an update on existing projects and an overview of future proposals.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Committee be recommended to:
- a. Review the Annual Report and it's contents.
 - b. Note the Annual Report

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. 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.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. Not alternative options were considered, as the Annual Report is a constitutionally required update to the committee, and reports on past activity for information only.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. No consultation on this report was undertaken, as the report is for information only with no decisions arising.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. On Tuesday 28 November 2017, Members of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee determined that an Annual Report on Licensing should be received. The Council's Constitution was subsequently amended to require an Annual Report to the Committee.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The Annual Licensing Report covers the same reporting period as the previous years, 1 October to 30 September, to allow a direct comparison with the previous years' statistics.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. As the Committee is not being asked to make a decision, there are no specific legal implications to this report other than the reference to the Council Constitution in paragraph 3.1 above.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. As the Committee is not being asked to make a decision, there are no specific legal implications relating to this report; other than in reference to the fulfilment of a requirement of Section 8.2.3 of the Council's Constitution.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. There are no risk implications arising from this report, as the report is for information only.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. As this is an information only report, there are no equalities implications arising for this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the Annual Licensing Report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no Human Resource Implications arising from this report.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix 1 - Annual Licensing Report 2025/2026

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

17.1 Joe Mannix, Licensing & Community Safety Manager
joe.mannix@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None.

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Annual Licensing Report

1st October 2025 to 30th September 2026

1. Executive Summary

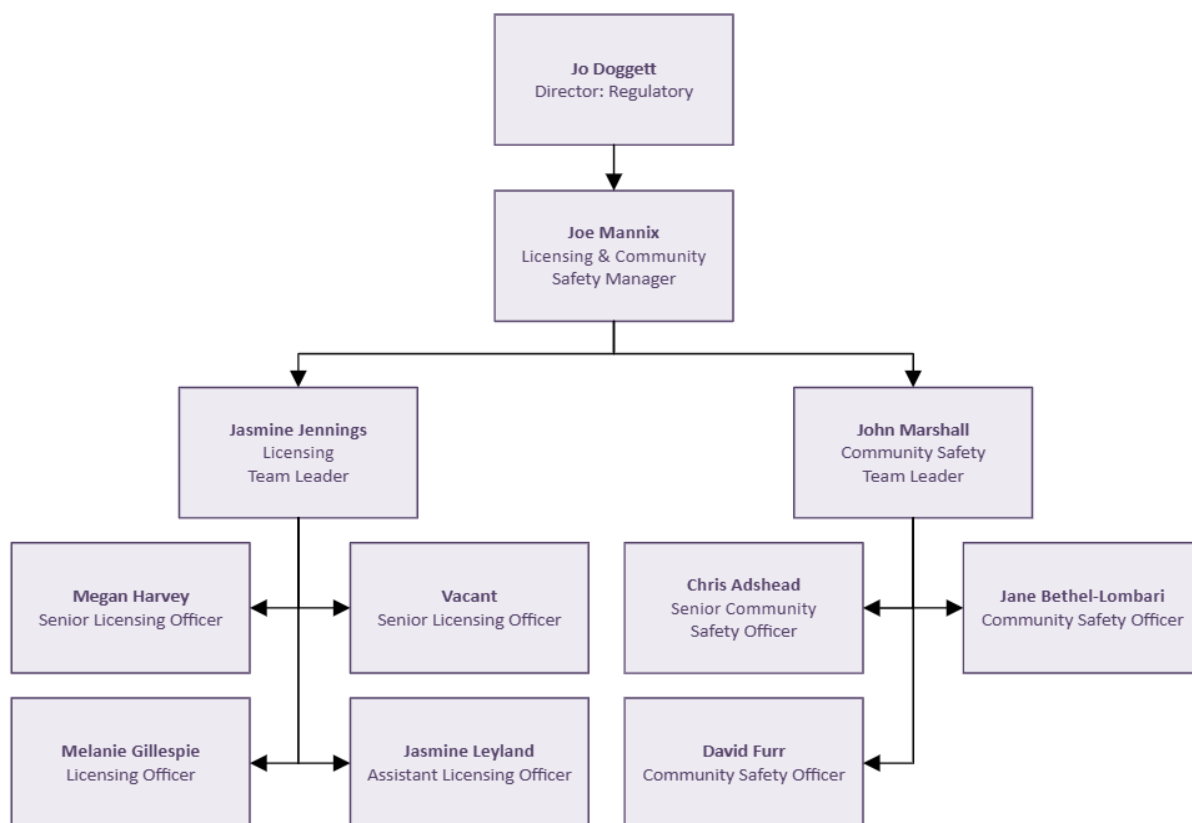
1.1 The purpose of this report is to give the Licensing and Regulation Committee:

- An overview of the work undertaken by the Licensing Service over the preceding twelve months
- an update on existing projects and policies
- an overview of future proposals

1.2 The period covered by the report is 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026.

2. Service Structure

2.1 The Licensing and Community Safety is a combined service area, covering a wide range of duties. This report focusses specifically on the activity of the Licensing Service.



2.2 The team is helped by officers in the Regulatory Support Unit (RSU) who undertake a range of administrative functions for the service ranging from basic enquiries to the processing of low-risk applications. This help is essential in being able to deliver an effective licensing service to our customers.

2.3 Licensing officer posts are all career-graded to encourage staff development and help with staff retention and service resilience.

- 2.4 All activities undertaken by the Licensing Service are in fulfilment of statutory duties placed on the Council, and the promotion of the relevant Licensing and Policy objectives.
- 2.5 The licensing of the use of council land is undertaken by the Greenspace Service Manager.
- 2.6 The Licensing Service's main activities are the determination, issue and enforcement of licences/consents/permits for a defined range of otherwise prohibited commercial activities.

3. Alcohol, entertainment, and late-night refreshment

- 3.1 This includes:
- o The sales and supply of alcohol
 - o The performance of plays
 - o The exhibition of films
 - o Indoor sporting events
 - o Boxing and wrestling
 - o The performance of live music
 - o The playing of recorded music
 - o The performance of dance
 - o The sale of hot food/drink between the hours of 11pm and 5am
- 3.2 Examples of premises that fall within this regime are pubs, members clubs, restaurants, cafes, cinemas, community halls, late night takeaway shops, theatres, off licences, supermarkets, boxing/wrestling venues, music concerts and outdoor music festivals.
- 3.3 Mandatory licence conditions require any film shown to the public to either be classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) or the local licensing authority.
- 3.4 There is an increasing number of small independent film makers locally where BBFC classification is cost prohibitive, therefore the licensing service undertakes the age classification of these films on a cost recovery basis.
- 3.5 North Herts has a high number of outdoor events and festivals across the district, which is an area of growth. Examples of recent events are:
- Iron Maiden at Knebworth Park (2026)
 - Liam Gallagher at Knebworth Park (2022)
 - Try Fest in Letchworth (annual event)
 - Lazy Sunday in Letchworth (annual event)
 - Goat Fest in Codicote (annual event)
 - Todd in the Hole in Todds Green (annual event)
 - Naughty 90s in Hitchin (annual event)

- Abode Halloween in Hitchin (annual event) Hitchin Priory Events (annual events)
 - Shhh Festival in Weston (annual event)
- 3.6 Oasis are performing at Knebworth Park over 3 weekends, with 6 event days with 125,000 people attending each day. This is authorised by a standalone premises licence, and work is already underway by the Licensing Service in conjunction with partner agencies at the Safety Advisory Group.
- 3.7 Temporary event notices (TENs) also fall within this regime; they are temporary permissions to undertake any combination of the above licensable activities. They are most often used by premises that do not have a permanent premises licence, for example a school fete or PTA fundraiser. Additionally, permanent premises licence holders sometimes use them for temporary extensions to existing licenced hours.
- 3.8 TENs are a 'light touch approach' to licensing and are less restrictive than a permanent premises licence as conditions cannot be attached. For that reason, prescribed limits apply to the number of TENs per person and per premises each year and the audience capacity is restricted to 499 persons at any one time.
- 4.0 **Gambling**
- 4.1 Examples of premises that fall within this regime are betting shops, bingo halls, casinos, racing track betting, amusement arcades and poker clubs.
- 4.2 It also includes small society lotteries, raffles, and gaming machine permits (pubs, clubs, motorway service stations, etc.).
- 5.0 **Taxis and Private Hire**
- 5.1 This includes taxi and private hire drivers, private hire operators, taxis, and private hire vehicles.
- 6.0 **Street Trading**
- 6.1 This covers the sale of goods in the street and any land open to the public without entry payment within the four main towns and adjacent to the main arterial routes.
- 6.2 It includes mobile vendors (such as burger vans, sandwich trucks or ice cream vans), markets (other than Charter or licensed local authority markets), car boot sales and temporary stalls.
- 7.0 **Pavement Licences**
- 7.1 Initially introduced during covid, to assist with the recovery of business after the national lockdown and during continued restrictions, these licences are for the provision of food and/or drink in conjunction to a brick and mortar

premises. It allows for al fresco dining on council land and highways adjacent or opposite the applicant's premises.

8.0 Charitable Collections

8.1 This covers collection of money in the street, or the collection of money or goods by going house to house, in the four main towns only.

8.2 Examples of collections covered by this regime include charity collections, sale of goods for charitable purposes, clothing collection bags or flower sellers going from pub to pub on Valentine's Day.

9.0 Animal Activities

9.1 This regime is targeted at ensuring the welfare of animals and covers premises such as:

- Dog kennels
- Catteries
- Home boarding of dogs
- Dog breeding
- Zoos
- Hiring of horses for riding
- Selling of pets
- Dangerous wild animals
- Dog day creches
- Keeping or training of animals for the purpose of exhibition/performance

9.2 On the 6th April 2026 the Animal Welfare (Primate Licences) (England) Regulations 2024 were commenced in full. These regulations made the keeping of Primates licensable, except for their keeping in a licensed Zoo or place specified under Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

10. Sex Establishments

10.1 This covers sex shops, sex cinemas or sexual entertainment venues (for example, lap dancing or pole dancing clubs).

11. Scrap Metal Dealers

11.1 This covers any site that:

- buys or sells scrap metal
- recovers salvageable parts from motor vehicles for re-use or sale, or buys written-off vehicles, repairs and resells them

11.2 It also includes mobile collectors that travel door-to-door collecting scrap metal. Mobile collectors must have a licence for each Council Area in which they undertake collections.

12. Hypnotism

- 12.1 This includes all performances of hypnotism for the purpose of entertaining an audience.

13. Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

- 13.1 A property is an HMO if both of the following apply:

- At least three tenants live there, forming more than one household.
- The toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities are shared.

- 13.2 An HMO needs a licence if the property is rented as a shared house, flat or bedsit if both the following apply:

- At least five tenants live there, forming more than one household.
- The toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities are shared.

- 13.3 Persons involved in the management of an HMO must be risk assessed by the Council to ensure that they are a “fit and proper person” to undertake that role.

14. Park homes, caravan sites, and camp sites

- 14.1 The provision of land for mobile (park) homes, caravans, or camping in any moveable structure requires a licence from the local authority.

- 14.2 Persons involved in the management of a park home/caravan/camping site must be assessed by the Council to ensure that they are a ‘fit and proper’ person to undertake that role.

15. Skin piercing

- 15.1 Any person or business undertaking skin piercing activities must be registered with the local authority. The premises in which the activities are provided must also be registered. Surgical or medical procedures, such as botox or lip fillers, are not covered by this registration.

Skin piercing activities include, but are not limited to:

- acupuncture
- tattooing
- cosmetic piercing
- electrolysis
- semi-permanent skin colouring

- 15.2 Although this is only a registration scheme, local byelaws enforce standards of hygiene and safety.

- 15.3 Primary legislation has been enacted by Parliament to allow the Secretary of State to introduce a new non-surgical skin piercing licensing regime. A consultation process on the details of the licence scheme was undertaken by Government.

15. Inspections

- 15.1 The licensing service undertakes a series of risk-based planned inspections to ensure licence compliance and minimise the risk to public safety.
- 15.2 Inspections are targeted at premises based on risk to the public, plus more proactive inspection visits for new premises management are being undertaken with a view to reducing the need for reactive visits if problems arise.
- 15.3 The number of inspections undertaken in the reporting year is shown the table below. This is a reduction on last year, due to a reduction in staff resource with 2 Vacant posts including the service manager role.

Inspections						
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Animal Inspection	2	10	23	16	25	15
Animal Courtesy Visit				24	12	5
Gambling Inspection	0	0	7	1	0	0
Alcohol/Entertainment/LNR Risk-Rating Visit	0	1	65	303	94	109
Alcohol/Entertainment/LNR Courtesy Visit	0	0	45	2	4	5
Private Hire Operator Inspection	1	5	3	5	13	8
Taxi / Private Hire Courtesy Visit	0	0	21	25	8	26
HMO				20	6	0
Caravans / Park Homes				11	0	0
Skin Piercing	0	14	49	36	61	55
Scrap metal Site	0	0	0	0	5	0
Sex Establishment	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3	30	213	443	228	223

16. Applications

- 16.1 The number of applications received during the reporting period is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 16.2 The number of applications received 2025/2026 is lower than the number received in 2024/2025, largely due to the cyclical renewal dates on longer term licences. However, it is clear that there has been a decrease in the number of Taxi and Private Hire licences.

17. Current Licences

- 17.1 As of 30 September 2026, the number of licences issued and in force by the licensing service is attached at **Appendix B**.

17.2 In addition to these licences which, in most cases, are granted in perpetuity, the licensing service also issued 607 temporary event notices which are specific to one off small-scale events during the period covered by this report.

17.3 This indicates a consistent number of small events over the last 3 years, in line with the corporate objective of encouraging growth.

18. **Service requests**

18.1 The licensing service receives a high number of service requests in writing and by telephone, most notably requests for advice on the need for, and the submission of, an application.

18.2 Due to a previously high-volume of requests made by telephone, the Licensing Service primarily operates a digital first approach to service requests. This allows an auditable trail of receipt to completion of service requests, and provides officers the ability to better track requests to ensure service level agreements; and to allow a more intelligent use of data for workforce planning and fee setting.

18.3 In addition to service requests, the licensing service also undertakes various functions relating to taxi and private hire licensing that are an integral part of assessing drivers' ability to meet the 'fit and proper' person test and that vehicles are roadworthy and compliant with the Council's policy.

18.4 The number of recorded service requests and ancillary functions within the reporting period was 523. A positive trend within these stats are only 153 of these service requests took the form of complaints; with 487 requests for advice.

18.5 The licensing service receives a significant number of freedom of information (FOI) requests, mainly in relation to taxi and private hire licensing, premises licensing, or animals. The full implementation of the public licensing register had decreased the amount of officer time needed to process these requests as the majority can now be referred directly to the information already publicly available on the register. However, FOI requests are getting more complex and have had a significant impact on officer workload. Numbers of FOI requests have not been included in this report as they are recorded separately by the FOI Team.

19. **Licensing Fees**

19.1 Established licensing fee case law supported by the Hemming judgement prevents local authorities from making a profit from licensing fees. The Hemming judgement ruled that fees can only cover the reasonable costs of administration and enforcement of the specific licensing regime and should be cost neutral over a period of three years.

19.2 The last fee setting, and full costing exercise, was undertaken before the fees were set for 2025/26.

20. **Licensing Hearings**

20.1 Applications under the Licensing Act 2003 for new, varied, or reviewed premises licences/club premises certificates that receive representations are determined by a licensing and appeals sub-committee.

20.2 Only three licensing sub-committee hearings were held within the reporting period, in keeping with the statistics for 2024/2025. These hearings were:

- Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence in respect of Letchworth Lido.
- Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence in respect of Hartsfield JMI School, Baldock.
- Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence in respect of the George & Dragon, Graveley.

20.3 The amendment to the Constitution requiring a fourth (non-voting) sub-committee member to be present in case of technology failure during virtual hearings continues to be a valuable training tool to allow newly trained members to experience an actual hearing prior to sitting as a voting member at subsequent hearings.

20.4 As with all meetings during the pandemic, licensing sub-committees met virtually which proved successful in increasing attendance by persons making representations, or interested observers, due to the convenience of not having to travel to the Council Offices. As these hearings are administered under the Licensing Act 2003 rather than the Local Government Act 1972, case law has confirmed they can continue to be held virtually. Where it is deemed more appropriate to meet in person due to the complexity of the hearing, in person meetings can be arranged however the default position remains as virtual meetings.

20.5 A licensing or licensing regulation sub-committee would also determine the following applications:

- Contested premises licence applications under the Gambling Act 2005
- All applications for new sex establishments

20.7 All other licensing decisions are delegated to the licensing and community safety manager, one of which is being appealed and is currently listed to be heard at court in November 2026.

21. **Enforcement**

21.1 The service has a range of enforcement tools available to ensure compliance with licence conditions or target unlicensed activity. Save for the most serious

cases where there is, or has been, an identifiable risk to public safety, enforcement activity is designed to secure future compliance.

21.2 Enforcement tools include but are not limited to:

- Advice and guidance
- Informal warnings
- Driver licence penalty points (taxi and private hire only)
- Community Protection Notices
- Fixed Penalty Notices
- Statutory Notices i.e., Improvement Notices
- Licence suspension
- Licence revocation
- Closure Notices
- Prosecution

22. **Policy**

21.1 To ensure transparency for applicants, licence holders and the public, and to ensure consistent decision-making, each aspect of licensing has its own policy clearly stating the Council's requirements and local interpretation where legislation allows. The Licensing and Regulation Committee is involved in the development and ongoing review of licensing policies as follows:

- Statutory policies under the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005
 - o These policies can only be adopted by Full Council however the Licensing and Regulation Committee is responsible for reviewing the results of the public consultations and recommending the policies to Full Council.
- Non- statutory policies
 - o Where policies are reserved for the Executive, Cabinet has the responsibility for the initial adoption of new policies
 - o Where policies are not reserved for the Executive, initial adoption falls to the Licensing and Regulation Committee
- Review and amendment of existing policies
 - o Statutory policies are reserved for Full Council
 - o Executive non-statutory policies can be amended by the relevant Executive Member
 - o Non-statutory policies not reserved for the Executive can be amended by the Licensing and Regulation Committee, or the licensing and community safety manager (in consultation with the relevant Executive Member and Chair of the Licensing and Regulation Committee) depending on the extent of the amendments. Each policy details the responsibilities of each of the potential decision makers.

- 21.2 Additionally, adopted policies include a provision for minor amendments to be made to existing policies by the licensing and community safety manager. Each policy defines the extent of the minor amendments allowed under that delegation and ordinarily require consultation with the relevant Executive Member and the Chair of the Licensing and Regulation Committee.
- 21.3 For this reporting period, 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026, the following policies have been subject to review:
- 21.3.1 Charitable Collections Policy: Some minor amendments are needed to this policy that fall within the remit of the licensing and community safety manager.
- 21.3.2 These amendments will be limited to issues that have arisen operationally with the policy such as collection locations, number of collections per day, clarification of wording, plus the amendment of job titles following the recent restructure.
- 21.3.3 Caravan and Camping Sites Policy: The current policy is due for review and will need updating to incorporate National Model Standard Conditions. All existing sites are in the process of being inspected to assess compliance against the Model Standards, which will help inform the revised policy wording. As these policy changes have the potential to impact on existing sites, this policy will be subject to public consultation and adoption by the Licensing and Regulation Committee. This is being completed by Environmental Health.
- 21.3.4 HMO Housing Standards and Licence Conditions: It is hoped to review the current housing standards and licence conditions to reflect recent national concerns such as damp/mould and ensure a consistent standard across the county with enforceable conditions to achieve those standards.

22. Channel Shift

- 22.1 Currently, customers contact the council via the customer service centre and RSU staff then have to transfer the request from the CRM into Idox Cloud (the licensing database). Work has commenced to investigate whether the two systems can communicate so that Idox Cloud automatically populates the correct data fields from the CRM to save officer time.
- 22.2 Discussions have taken place with the providers of Idox Cloud to link its online application portal with the council's payment facility to enable online submission and payment of all application types. The Idox Cloud product could work as an integral part of any customer portal facility offered by the council by using single sign-on technology.

22.3 Further discussions will be taking place in regard to an app that will allow Idox Cloud to be accessed by officers on any device, allowing online completion of inspection forms directly into the database using technology that will convert officer's handwritten notes into text.

22.4 Meetings have been scheduled with Idox to establish any opportunities to automate manual tasks to increase officer productivity.

23. **Project Updates**

23.1 The licensing service has several ongoing projects targeted at smarter ways of working, channel shift, public engagement, and income generation.

Public licensing register and portal

23.2 Work is continuing to facilitate online applications being submitted through the public register portal. Using single sign-on technology, the current licensing database can connect with any corporate system as part of the digitalisation project without the need to migrate data and system set-up. Online applications through the portal will be a significant resource saving for the Council as the application is released directly into the database automatically populating the database fields. Using the Government portal or in-house electronic application forms, information currently must be copy typed into the licensing database in the same way as applications received in hard copy and enquiries must be made with the payment service to ensure payment has been received.

23.3 All applications that are subject to public consultation are listed on the register and representations can be made directly through the portal into the licensing database. Once the online application forms are live, the portal can be extended to include service requests too.

Women and Girls Safety Charter

23.4 A Women and Girls Safety Charter for licensed premises in North Hertfordshire has been produced as part of the Community Safety Partnership's VAWG priority. Staff at licensed premises are provided suitable advice and training to ensure that a consistent cross-district process is in place to ensure that women and girls feel safe in licensed premises and know the safeguards available if they feel uncomfortable or have concerns.

23.5 The Charter is now live in Hitchin and Letchworth, with an additional video produced to inform the public of the purpose of the Charter, in addition to the training video for licensed premises staff.

23.6 Each premises signed up to the Charter has received a framed membership certificate signed by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, plus a membership window sticker. A dedicated webpage has been produced which

contains the Charter, the videos, and a list of premises that have achieved membership of the scheme.

- 23.7 The scheme is currently being reviewed to streamline inspection criteria and establish better ways of promoting the scheme to the public.

24. Team Development

- 24.1 As a regulatory service, it is essential that officers are given development opportunities to expand their knowledge. This is important in delivering the best possible service to our customers whilst retaining officers for service resilience. The cost of relevant development is included in the fee setting calculations.

BTEC Level 3 Certificate for Animal Inspectors

- 24.2 The licensing team leader already holds this qualification however the Council has no resilience in periods of absence; additionally, the animal licensing workload has significantly increased.
- 24.3 Two additional officers are in the final few weeks of their qualification. Not only will this provide resilience, but it may provide the opportunity for income generation by offering an inspections service to other local authorities without qualified inspectors.

Professional development

- 24.4 The Council pays for membership of the Institute of Licensing for qualified officers which gives access to a range of professional CPD training. This reporting period, officers have undertaken a range of courses directly related to their work. The organisation has become a Member Organisation, to gain better access to information and opportunities for the Council.

25. Horizon Scanning

- 25.1 The world of licensing has always been ever-changing however the number of planned legislative changes has the potential to significantly impact resources and existing projects. The following list is not exhaustive but contains the main proposals known to officers at the time of writing.

Skin piercing licensing scheme

- 25.6 The Health and Care Act 2022 contains a section enabling the Secretary of State to publish Regulations introducing a new licensing scheme for specified cosmetic procedures. The Government has indicated its intention to introduce a new licensing requirement for non-surgical cosmetic procedures to ensure public safety from these intrusive, and potentially dangerous, procedures. As part of the consultation response, it is currently the Government's position that

activities currently covered by the registration scheme will fall outside the new legislation.

- 25.7 The Government has concluded it's consultation, and the industry awaits the proposed regulations.

The Animal Welfare (Primate Licences) (England) Regulations 2024

- 25.8 The above regulations took effect from 6 April 2025 introducing the need for any person who keeps a primate in their possession (other than zoos or similar) to hold a licence from 6 April 2026.
- 25.9 This addresses concerns about the number of individuals that keep primates as pets without appropriate knowledge or understanding of the welfare needs of the kept species. Responsibility for administering and enforcing this new licensing regime falls to local authorities which will require additional training of officers. The main challenge arising from this legislation is determining how many, if any, primates are kept as pets in North Hertfordshire.

PROTECT Duty

- 25.10 The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 3rd April 2026. The Act places a legal duty on operators of qualifying premises and events to consider the risk of terrorism and take proportionate steps to reduce harm to the public should an attack occur. It aims to bring counter-terrorism preparedness in line with established health and safety responsibilities.
- 25.11 The Act applies to publicly accessible premises and events based on expected attendance:
- Standard Tier Premises: where 200 to 799 people may reasonably be present at the same time.
 - Enhanced Tier Premises and Qualifying Events: where 800 or more people may reasonably be present.
- 25.12 The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is responsible for regulating and enforcing the Act. It has powers to investigate non-compliance, issue notices and impose sanctions where necessary. They have indicated that enforcement of the Act will begin in Spring / Summer of 2027.

26. **Appendices**

- 26.1 Appendix A – Applications Received 2026

- 26.2 Appendix B – Licences in force on 30th September 2026

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Number of applications received																				
			2020/21			2021/22			2022/23			2023/24			2024/25			2025/26		
Animal Licensing	Animal Activity Licence	New	7			10			5			12			12			1		
		Amend a schedule of animals (No visit)	1			0			0			0			0			0		
		Renewal	13	21	21	17	27	27	6	11	11	10	22	22	18	30	30	6	7	7
Scrap Metal	Site Licence	New	1			1			0			4			0			0		
		Renewal	1	2		1	2		2	2		2	6		1	1		0	0	
	Collector Licence	New						1			0			0			0			
		Renewal		0	2		0	2	0	1	3	0	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	0
Alcohol, Entertainment & Late Night Refreshment	Club Premises Certificate	Replacement Licence	0			0			0			2			0			0		
		New	0			0			0			0			1			1		
		Variation	0			0			1			0			0			0		
		Minor Variation	1	1		0	0		0	1		0	2		0	1		0	1	
	Film Classification	New	0	0		1	1		0	0		0	0		3	3				
		Late TEN	70			119			150			124			141			124		
	Temporary Event Notice	TEN	177	247		429	548		469	619		501	625		473	614		483	607	
		New	50			62			46			70			55			54		
	Personal Licence	Replacement licence	3			5			2			4			1			4		
		Change of name or address	27	80		33	100		19	67		23	97		12	68		19	77	
		New	25			29			15			11			20			21		
	Premises Licence	Change of name or address	15			8			14			9			11			19		
		Vary DPS	51			76			69			74			45			30		
		Transfer	12			17			12			22			13			20		
		Variation	4			5			4			5			12			6		
		Minor Variation	7			10			14			9			2			10		
		Review	2			1			0			0			1			0		
		Interim Authority Notice	0			1			1			0			0			0		
		Replacement Licence	3			4			8			7			9			4		
		Notification of Interest	2	121	449	3	154	803	4	141	828	1	138	862	2	115	801	2	112	797
		Gambling	Notification of 2 or less Gaming Machines	New	5	5		3	3		3	3		2	2		2	2		10
Variation	0					1			0			0			0			0		
Licensed Premises Gaming Machines Permits	Replacement licence		0			0			0			0			0			0		
	New		1			0			0			0			0			0		
	Transfer		0	1		0	1		0	0		1	1		0	0		0	0	
Club Gaming Permit	New		0			0			0			0			0			0		
	Renewal		0	0		0	0		1	1		0	0		0	0		0	0	
Premises Licence	Replacement licence		5			0			0			3			0			0		
	Transfer		1	6		0	0		0	0		0	3		0	0		0	0	
Small Society Lottery	New		17			22			15			13			14			13		
	Renewal	54	71	83	58	80	84	73	88	92	70	83	89	64	78	80	76	89	99	

Number of applications received																				
			2020/21			2021/22			2022/23			2023/24			2024/25			2025/26		
Charitable Collections	House to House Collection	New	38			33			32			25			41			35		
	Street Collection	New	16	54	54	30	63	63	26	58	58	40	65	65	36	77	77	35	70	70
Sex Establishments	Sex Shop	Renewal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hypnotism	Hypnotism Permit	New	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Street Trading	Street Trading (Fixed Pitch)	New	5			2			5			7			9			2		
		Renewal	1	6		4	6		1	6		4	11		2	11		2	2	
	Street Trading (Town Centre)	New	2			1			1			1			0			0		
		Renewal	1	3		3	4		1	2		3	4		3	3		3	3	
	Street Trading Consent (Transient Trader)	New	0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0	
	Street Trading Consent (Special Event / Market)	New	0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0	
	Pavement Licence	New / Renewal	28	28	37	32	32	42	38	38	46	16	16	31	35	35	49	18	18	23
Houses of Multiple Occupancy	HMO Licence	New				0			4			1			1			3		
		Temporary exemption				0			1			0			0					
		Renewal				1	1	1	2	7	7	23	24	7	23	24	24	1	4	4
Park Homes and Caravan Licences	Caravan Site Licences	New				0			0			2			2			0		
		Renewal				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0
Skin Piercing	Skin Piercing Registration	Premises				18			15			13			13			18		
		Personal				31			32			26			26			64		
		Variations				2	51	51	6	53	53	2	41	53	2	41	41	1	83	83
			20/21 Total: 1216		21/22 Total: 1679		22/23 Total: 1712		23/24 Total: 1784		24/25 Total: 1823		25/26 Total: 1500							

Licences in force on 30th September 2026

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Adult Gaming Centre Premises Licence	1	1	1	1	1	1
Animal Activity Licence	32	36	36	39	38	34
Betting (Other) Premises Licence	12	11	10	10	10	8
Club Gaming Machine Permit	2	2	1	0	0	0
Club Gaming Permit	1	1	1	1	1	1
Club Premises Certificate	31	30	30	30	31	31
Dual Driver	85	80	89	98	87	92
Fast Track Club Gaming Machine Permit	9	9	9	9	5	5
Fast Track Club Gaming Permit	2	2	2	2	0	0
Hackney Carriage Driver	109	102	94	86	86	78
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	187	175	166	161	162	78
House to House Collection	11	24	22	18	23	132
Hypnotism Permit	0	0	1	0	0	0
Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permit	16	16	14	14	11	8
Notification of 2 or less Gaming Machines	77	78	79	79	80	80
Pavement Licences	24	20	21	13	7	36
Personal Licence	1700	1764	1806	1874	1913	1986
Premises Licence	495	512	512	514	527	537
Private Hire Driver	82	80	104	125	135	134
Private Hire Operator	26	22	19	21	21	25
Private Hire Vehicle	72	85	94	118	117	108
Scrap Metal Dealer Collector	0	0	1	1	1	0
Scrap Metal Dealer Site	4	5	5	7	6	4
Sex Shop	0	0	0	0	0	0
Small Society Lotteries	68	80	85	83	83	83
Street Collection	2	4	6	9	9	1
Street Trading (Fixed Pitch)	2	2	1	2	1	5
Street Trading (Town Centre Consent)	1	3	3	3	2	2
Street Trading (Special Event/Market Consent)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unlicensed FEC Gaming Permit	1	1	1	1	1	1
Skin piercing: individual *		113	173	196	223	280
Skin piercing: premises *		73	150	163	177	197
Park Homes and Caravan Sites *		10	10	10	10	10
Houses of Multiple Occupancy *		41	38	34	46	53
	3052	3382	3584	3722	3814	4010

* Responsibility for licensing of these licence types transferred to Licensing from Environmental Health on 01/04/2022