

Licensing Committee

Licensing Activity Report 2025



Date of meeting:	02 May 2025
Title of Report:	Licensing Activity Report (April 2023 to March 2025)
Lead Member:	Councillor Sally Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Events, Cemeteries & Crematoria)
Lead Strategic Director:	Professor Steve Maddern (Director of Public Health)
Author:	Graham Hooper
Contact Email:	graham.hooper@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	GHO/LIC/LAR24/25
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the Licensing Service for the last two financial years. It outlines the various regimes and applications managed by the Licensing Service, team performance, notable trends, and high-profile applications. Additionally, it offers a summary of the work carried out by the agencies involved in regulating the licensing regime within the scope of the Committee's responsibilities and includes the details on the Police review of the Cumulative Impact Policy

Recommendations and Reasons

Members are asked to consider this report and note the contents. It is intended to inform Members of the enforcement activities carried out by the Licensing Enforcement Officers during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial year periods.

Alternative options considered and rejected

None identified

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

This report aligns with the delivery of the Council's priorities, particularly in the following areas:

1. Working with the Police to Tackle Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour:
The activities of the Licensing Team contribute to the framework through which the Licensing Authority and the Police collaborate to promote and ensure the achievement of the licensing objectives, with a focus on reducing alcohol-related crime. The licensing objectives are as follows:
 - Prevention of Crime and Disorder
 - Promotion of Public Safety
 - Prevention of Nuisance
 - Protection of Children from Harm
2. Keeping Children, Adults, and Communities Safe:

The work of the Licensing Team supports the regulatory framework governing the sale of alcohol, the provision of certain entertainment, and late-night refreshment. This ensures that Plymouth remains a friendly and welcoming city, where individuals feel safe. It also plays a crucial role in protecting children, young people, and adults from harm.

Implications for the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Compliance with statutory duties as part of the licensing function is delivered within existing budgets. Licence fees and charges are reviewed annually with the Licensing Service and are set in line with national guidance. The council aims to recover all costs associated with criminal investigations and successfully defended appeals in the Magistrates' Court.

Financial Risks

None

Legal Implications

(Provided by IW)

No legal implications identified

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None identified

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Enforcement Activity Report							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment (Not applicable)							
C	Climate Impact Assessment (Not applicable)							

Background papers:

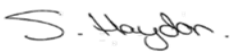
**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Sign off:

Fin	OW. 25.26 .001	Leg	IW – 23.04 .25 4728	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Asset s	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Katharine O’Conner Head of Food Safety and Misc Licensing katharine.o'connor@plymouth.gov.uk											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Professor Steve Maddern Director Of Public Health Office of the Director of Public Health Steve.Maddern@plymouth.gov.uk Date agreed: 23/04/2025											
Cabinet Member approval:  Councillor Sally Haydon Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Events, Cemeteries & Crematoria) approved by email Date approved: 23/04/2025											

Appendix A

Enforcement Activity Report

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared to give Members of the Licensing Committee a comprehensive update on the activities conducted by agencies tasked with regulating licensable activities. Particular emphasis is placed on the management of the Evening and Night-Time Economy (ENTE). Additionally, this report will outline the specific work of the licensing team for the periods from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

1.2 From April 2023 to March 2024, 1818 applications were received. From April 2024 to March 2025, 1708 applications were received.

1.3 Applications received cover the following areas:

- Alcohol and entertainment
- Gambling
- Sex Establishments
- Petroleum
- Explosives
- Animal welfare
- Charitable collections
- Scrap metal
- Caravan licensing
- Body and Beauty Art

2.0 Licensing Act 2003

2.1 Licensing Officers, with administrative support, undertake all aspects of the licensing function covered by the Licensing Act 2003. The number of applications processed by Officers during 2023 to 2025 financial years are shown in Table 1 below:

Licence Type	Financial Year					
	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Applications, Transfers, Variations and Suspensions etc.	578 (+ 214 suspensions)	339 (+ 301 suspensions)	613 (+ 204 suspensions)	523 (+ 244 suspensions)	691 (+ 166 suspensions)	636 (+ 121 suspensions)
New Personal licences	159 + 139 Change of address apps	103 + 80 Change of address apps	145 + 111 Change of address apps	154 + 91 Change of address apps	79 + 99 Change of address apps	85 + 82 Change of address apps
TEN's	462	91	217	398	444	355

Table 1: Application Numbers by Years

- 2.2 Responsible authorities continue to submit formal representations regarding licensing applications. In most instances, the applicant concurs with the advice provided, facilitating the mediation process. Committee Members receive updates on all mediated applications through an annual Committee report.
- 2.3 The number of premises inspections made over the last two financial years are shown in Table 2 below.

Financial Year	Premises Inspections
2022/2023	42
2023/2024	56
2024/2025	74

- 2.4 Table 3 below shows the number of applications, variations or reviews that went before Licensing Sub-Committee.

	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Apps or Variations	7	8	5	2	8	3	7	4
Premise Licence Review	4	0	2	3	0	1	1	3
Expedited Reviews	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0

3.0 Licensing Act Policy

- 3.1 The Licensing Act 2003 requires that we must prepare and publish a statement of licensing policy every 5 years. The published policy then provides the framework for all decisions on applications relating to the Licensing Act 2003 and the way we carry out our functions in relation to the legislation. The policy is also intended to provide advice and guidance to anyone that may be involved in the licensing application process, from applicants and licence holders to responsible authorities and members of the public who wish to make a representation about an application.
- 3.2 The policy was adopted by Full Council on 29 January 2024, following public consultation and is effective from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029 and can be viewed at the following link:
[Licensing Policy](#)

3.3 Cumulative Impact Areas

Cumulative Impact Assessments (CIA) were introduced into legislation by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, coming into effect on 6th April 2018. Councils are mandated to conduct a CIA to evaluate whether certain areas within the City, characterised by a significant number of licensed premises, adversely affect one or more licensing objectives. A CIA is a specialised policy consideration and must be incorporated into the Council's Licensing Policy.

3.4 Review of the Cumulative Impact Assessment

The CIA is subject to review every three years, with the latest review conducted in December 2024. No changes are proposed to the CIA areas at this time; however, current evidence does not support the long-term inclusion of Stoke as a CIA area. Following consultation with the Police and statutory stakeholders, it has been agreed to maintain this CIA area and to revoke it during the next review if evidence continues to support this course of action.

3.5 The review carried out by the Police can be seen attached to this report as **Appendix B**.

4.0 Public Safety and Public Nuisance

4.1 The number of noise complaints received against licensed premises decreased from 150 in 2022/2023 to 130 in 2023/2024 with a further decrease to 89 in 2024/2025. The decrease in noise complaints against pubs and clubs in Plymouth, mirrors the trend across the UK and can be attributed to several factors:

- **Improved Soundproofing and Noise Management:** Many venues have invested in better soundproofing and noise management systems to minimise disturbances to nearby residents
- **Community Engagement:** Pubs and clubs are increasingly engaging with local communities to address concerns proactively, often resolving issues before they escalate to formal complaints
- **Legislative Changes:** There have been adjustments in local regulations and licensing conditions that encourage venues to adopt quieter practices and manage noise more effectively, for example policy requirement for total sound containment in premises after 11pm
- **Economic Factors:** The financial pressures on venues, especially post-pandemic, have led to a reduction in live music events and other activities that typically generate noise complaints
- **Urban Planning:** Some areas have seen changes in urban planning, with new residential developments incorporating better noise mitigation measures

These combined efforts have contributed to a noticeable decline in noise complaints against pubs and clubs across the UK.

4.2 Where noise complaints are received, Environmental Health Officers continue to follow an escalation process, engaging with the responsible individual at the earliest opportunity to allow for prompt resolution without the need for formal action. In most cases, the complaint is resolved through an action plan or minor variation, with the agreement of the licensee.

4.3 Officers coordinate out-of-hours visits as necessary to address any noise or public nuisance originating from licensed premises, ensuring prompt resolution.

4.4 Officers collaborate with licensed premises to implement action plans aimed at minimizing the impact on local residents. This remains a critical focus, two years after reopening following Covid-19, particularly given the increased use of outdoor areas, with many businesses taking the opportunity to expand these spaces and continue applying for pavement licences.

One premises licence was reviewed for public nuisance (Frontfield Stores) during the 2023/2024 financial year. Two premises licences (Club Inferno and Fleet Street) were reviewed in the 2024-2025 financial year due to public safety and public nuisance.

Both premises had their Premise Licences revoked - Club Inferno have appealed the decision and the hearing has been listed before Magistrates in July and August 2025. Club Inferno had their licence revoked.

5.0 Protection of Children from harm

- 5.1 The Police, Trading Standards, and the Licensing Team continue to collaborate in efforts to reduce young people's access to alcohol, both from on-licences and off-licences, through neighbourhood interventions and providing guidance to retailers.
- 5.2 The Licensing Team and Police Licensing regularly meet with Devon Trading Standards to coordinate test purchases, based on intelligence and complaints received.
- 5.3 Businesses are supported in minimising the potential for underage sales and are encouraged to adopt a Challenge 25 policy. All licensed premises in Plymouth are provided with free access to the regional underage sales web-based toolkit, "No Proof of Age No Sale (NPOANS)," for staff training, and all are regularly reminded of this valuable resource.

6.0 Crime and Disorder

Please see the police report 2023-2025 attached as **Appendix C**, compiled by the Police Alcohol Licensing Team which provides details and information relating to the Crime and Disorder licensing objective over the last 2 financial years.

The Officer has been invited to present information to the Committee at this meeting and answer any questions that may arise.

7.0 Gambling Policy

- 7.1 Licensing Officers, supported by administrative staff, are responsible for regulating establishments such as casinos, betting shops, adult gaming centres, and bingo halls in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005. Comprehensive inspections of these gambling premises are conducted annually to ensure full compliance with relevant regulations.
- 7.2 The Gambling Act mandates that the Council's [gambling policy](#) be reviewed every three years. The new policy should cover the period from January 2025 to January 2028. However, in 2023, the Gambling Commission (GC) and HM Government initiated public consultations on proposed amendments to UK gambling regulations. Some of these changes may significantly impact local authority gambling regulations. The GC has indicated that it is still considering feedback from these consultations and will not update the Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities before the review deadline for the current Statement of Gambling Policy.
- 7.3 Consequently, a review of the Council's existing Statement of Policy was conducted, establishing that the current policy includes all requirements and recommendations under existing guidance. As no significant changes were necessary, it was agreed, with the approval of the GC and at the January Full Council meeting, that the existing Statement of Policy will remain in force from January 2025. The policy will be reviewed again once the new statutory guidance is released.

8.0 Sex Establishments

- 8.1 Currently, Plymouth City Council licenses one lap dancing club and one sex shop. During the forthcoming year the Licensing Team will review, consult and update the Council's [Sex Establishments Licensing Policy](#) which prescribes the Authorities controls on the legitimate operation of sex establishments and that such businesses that are a legitimate part of the retail and leisure industry.

9.0 Partnership Working

- 9.1 The Licensing Team is actively involved in several multi-agency groups that support the promotion of the licensing objectives. By working in partnership with various stakeholders, the team aims to achieve these objectives. These groups include:

9.2 Responsible Authorities Meetings

The responsible authorities convene regularly to discuss enforcement options and develop strategies for addressing 'problem premises.' Establishments operating within the Evening and Night-Time Economy (ENTE) continue to receive proactive guidance from enforcement agencies, including Licensing, Environmental Health, Fire Service, Trading Standards, and the Police, with the aim of fostering a responsible ENTE.

Interventions involve both unannounced and scheduled visits to evaluate licensed premises' adherence to licensing conditions and other relevant workplace regulations. Officers from all enforcement agencies conduct joint inspections, where appropriate, to ensure a coordinated approach to enforcement is maintained. This collaborative effort demonstrates to licensees and designated premises supervisors that the agencies work together. Additionally, enforcement agencies carry out night-time inspections to assess the compliance of licensed premises with their regulatory obligations.

9.3 Multi-Agency Groups

The Licensing Team is an active member of Safer Plymouth, as well as the Evening and Night-Time Economy Group (ENTE), the Alcohol Harm Reduction Subgroup, the Predatory Males in the ENTE Group and the Destination Plymouth Group.

9.4 Plymouth Pubwatch

The Licensing Team and the Police continue to support the Plymouth Pubwatch scheme. Pubwatch schemes are local, independent groups composed of individuals working in licensed premises, with the primary objectives of tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour and criminal activity, promoting a safe drinking environment for customers, ensuring secure working conditions for staff, and enhancing communication and information-sharing among licensees. Plymouth's Pub watch scheme is highly active, organising various safety and awareness campaigns and supporting initiatives aimed at improving safety within licensed premises. Pubwatch meets monthly, with ongoing support from the Licensing Team, which provides updates and advice.

9.5 Purple Flag

The Licensing Team actively supports the Purple Flag award, which recognises excellence in safety, partnership, and diversity within the night-time economy. This prestigious award offers significant

benefits to various Council services and the broader community. In 2024, Plymouth successfully renewed its application, maintaining the award for the ninth consecutive year.

Plymouth was evaluated on several key factors that contribute to making the city a safe place to visit and live, including emergency help points, the safe bus service, ongoing efforts to address Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and the night bus service that operated last year.

Areas awarded the Purple Flag are recognised for offering a vibrant and diverse mix of entertainment and culture, while prioritising the safety and wellbeing of both visitors and residents.

A wide range of organisations collaborate to make Plymouth a welcoming and successful destination. These include the Council, Devon and Cornwall Police, local pubs, restaurants, sports and entertainment venues, retail and transport operators, as well as dedicated street pastors and taxi marshals.

9.6 Devon Licensing Officers Group (DLOG)

Plymouth Licensing Officers attend and actively participate in Licensing Forum Groups, which aim to promote consistency and best practices in licensing across Devon and Cornwall.

9.7 Safety Advisory Groups

The Council collaborates with event organisers to maintain reasonable standards of public safety at events and to promote the wellbeing of the public, officials, event organisers, and performers. The Plymouth Sports Advisory Group (SAG) and the Plymouth Event Safety Advisory Group (PESAG) serve as platforms for organisers to share their event plans and receive feedback from relevant agencies. The Licensing Team currently chairs the PESAG.

9.8 Institute of Licensing

The professional body for licensing matters has played a crucial role in providing access to case law, legislative updates, training, and facilitating information sharing. The Licensing Team is a member of the Institute of Licensing (IOL) and participates in regular training sessions and legislative updates, offering a local authority perspective on several key legislative changes.

9.9 Community Alcohol Partnership

The Licensing Authority supports the alcohol industry in demonstrating its commitment to promoting responsible drinking by ensuring that the sector does not encourage young people to consume alcohol.

A Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) is a Community Interest Company (CiC) that brings together and supports local partnerships, including councils, police, retailers, schools, health providers, and community groups, with the aim of reducing alcohol-related harm among young people, improving their health and wellbeing, and enhancing their communities.

As a member of the Plymouth CAP, the Licensing Authority actively supports the vital work of preventing underage drinking and mitigating alcohol-related harm to young people.

Further information on C.A.P initiatives can be found at: [Community Alcohol Partnerships](#)

9.10 Miscellaneous Groups

The Licensing Team continues to engage in multi-agency collaboration on safeguarding initiatives, as well as projects addressing:

- Modern slavery
- Child sexual exploitation,
- Organised Crime
- Hate Crime
- Predatory Behaviour in the ENTE

10.0 Work Initiatives for 2025-2026

10.1 The responsible authorities will continue to support licensed premises to ensure that they are best placed to contribute towards providing a positive and well-managed ENTE.

10.2 All agencies will continue to meet to discuss enforcement strategies, best practice and on-going operations to ensure that resources are best targeted at those premises that contribute significantly to undermining the licensing objectives.

10.3 We intend to:

- 10.3.1 Continue our joint working with all agencies involved in the ENTE
- 10.3.2 Chair the Event Safety Advisory Group
- 10.3.3 Review the Sex Establishments Licensing Policy
- 10.3.4 Monitor progress regarding Gambling Commission updates and their impact on our policy
- 10.3.5 Review our Charitable Collections Policy
- 10.3.6 Review our Caravan Licensing activities
- 10.3.7 Support Plymouth to retain the Purple Flag Award for the City
- 10.3.8 Support Best Bar None, Pub watch and the Community Alcohol Partnership
- 10.3.9 Work with partner agencies and with licensed businesses throughout the implementation of the Protect Duty (Martyn's Law, see 9.4 below)
- 10.3.10 Undertake a programme of alcohol and gambling test purchasing operations
- 10.3.11 Continue our joint working to detect, deter and disrupt modern slavery child sexual exploitation and organized crime

10.4 Protect Duty – Martyn's Law

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, also known as Martyn's Law, received Royal Assent on Thursday 3 April 2025.

Martyn's Law aims to enhance national security and reduce the public's risk from terrorism by improving the protection of public venues. It will require those responsible for certain locations to assess the threat of terrorism and implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures.

The legislation will ensure that organisations are prepared, capable of responding effectively, and clear on the actions to take in the event of an attack. Enhanced protection will be achieved through improved security systems, staff training, and more transparent processes.

The Licensing Team will collaborate with partner agencies and engage with licensed businesses throughout the implementation of this process.

11.0 Conclusion

- 11.1 This report enables Committee Members to be informed and to aid decision making in the future by seeking to provide an insight into the range of work initiatives and enforcement operations undertaken by the Licensing Team and the Police Alcohol Licensing Team regulating the evening and nighttime economy throughout 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 11.2 In addition, the report provides information on work initiatives planned for the coming year and how partner agencies will continue to interact to ensure that limited resources are targeted effectively.

Appendix B CIA Report 2021-2024

Appendix C Police Report 2023-2025