

‘Reforming the Licensing System’

Call For Evidence

1. Call for Evidence: Reforming the Licensing Framework

Purpose

The Government invites views and evidence to inform the development of a modern, proportionate and enabling licensing system. This call for evidence builds on the Licensing Taskforce recommendations and the Government’s response[1] and supports the Government’s commitment to reduce regulatory burdens by 25% by the end of this Parliament[2]. This Call for Evidence focuses on the ‘on trade’ in relation to alcohol sales, for example pubs, restaurants and nightclubs, and on all entertainment licensed under the Licensing Act 2003.

Who Should Respond

- Licensed businesses and trade bodies
- Local authorities and licensing officers
- Police and other enforcement agencies
- Cultural and community organisations
- Residents’ advocacy groups
- Legal, planning and regulatory professionals
- Public health organisations
- Local news publishers
- Members of the public

Introduction

The Government’s licensing reforms aim to create a modern, proportionate, and enabling system that supports economic growth, revitalizes high streets and fosters vibrant communities.

Central to this vision is reducing administrative burdens on businesses by 25% while maintaining strong safeguards for public safety, crime prevention and public health.

The current licensing system, under the Licensing Act 2003 and supported by statutory guidance, regulates activities such as the sale of alcohol, provision of entertainment and late-night refreshment. Local authorities issue licences and enforce conditions based on four licensing objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder; public safety; the prevention of public nuisance; and the protection of children from harm. Applications for, and variations to, licences are

assessed against these objectives. The aim of the licensing system is to support vibrant local economies while ensuring communities are safe and protected, with businesses benefiting from a fair and proportionate regulatory framework. However, as the Taskforce has said, over the years the balance of the system has shifted, with greater weight being given to public safety and crime prevention, under the statutory licensing objectives, and less of a focus on business resilience and growth.

Reform of the regime seeks to streamline outdated processes, improve consistency across local authorities and better integrate licensing with related regimes such as planning, community cohesion, tourism and cultural policy. It should promote fairness, transparency and responsiveness to local needs, while encouraging innovation and investment in hospitality, leisure, culture and night-time economies. Through mechanisms like a National Licensing Policy Framework, a licensing condition amnesty and continuing the transition towards online systems, the Government aims to make systems more effective and efficient, empowering local authorities and businesses alike. Reform will be shaped through broad stakeholder engagement, including this call for evidence.

Strategic initiatives such as zoning, promotion of tourism and growth and enhanced training for licensing officers will help ensure effective delivery.

As part of our commitment to rebalance the licensing system, as reforms are implemented we will monitor their impact on the existing licensing objectives, on local authority and police resources, on public health, and on business resilience and growth.

This call for evidence focuses on those proposals where the Taskforce indicated there is potential for the greatest benefit. Other proposals, including some Taskforce recommendations, will be considered further in due course and consulted on as appropriate.

[1] [Licensing taskforce report and government response - GOV.UK](#)

[2] [New approach to ensure regulators and regulation support growth \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)

5. Do you or the organisation/ business that you work for, hold an alcohol licence issued for a premises located in either England or Wales under the Licensing Act 2003? *

- Yes – the Council’s Town Centres and Community (Markets) team
- No
- Don’t know
- Prefer not to say

6. Have you engaged with the alcohol licensing process previously?

- Yes, as an applicant
- Yes, as a consultee/objector
- Yes, as a responsible authority

- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

5. National Licensing Policy Framework

Our aim is to create a balanced licensing system that supports wider national and regional policies.

The Licensing Taskforce recommended that government "establish a National Licensing Policy Framework to harmonise licensing practices across authorities while preserving local discretion. It would align licensing with broader government goals — economic growth, cultural development and public safety — without requiring primary legislation. Delivered via licensing circulars, it would reduce regulatory burdens, improve consistency, and support fairer decision-making."

What is a National Licensing Policy Framework

The Licensing Act 2003 establishes the legal framework for alcohol, entertainment and late-night refreshment licensing in England and Wales. The statutory guidance offers detailed advice to licensing authorities on interpreting and applying the Act.

The proposed National Licensing Policy Framework (NLPF) would help deliver a balanced licensing system that reflects the original intent of the licensing framework, for example:

- giving business greater freedom and flexibility to meet customers' expectations
- greater choice for customers, including tourists, about where, when and how they spend their leisure time
 - encouraging more family-friendly premises where younger children can go with their families
- further development within communities of our rich culture of live music, dancing and theatre
- the regeneration of areas that need the increased investment and employment opportunities that a thriving and safe night-time economy can bring
- the necessary protection of local residents, whose lives can be blighted by disturbance and anti-social behaviour associated with some people visiting licensed premises

In addition, the NLPF will help to harmonise licensing practices across local authorities while preserving local discretion. It would sit alongside the Licensing Act 2003 and the statutory guidance, providing national direction to support consistency, transparency and alignment with broader government goals such as economic growth, enhancing cultural representation, high street resilience and improving public health and wellbeing.

The Government envisages that the overarching objective of any NLPF would be to establish a consistent, transparent, and strategically aligned licensing system that empowers local

authorities while supporting national goals for economic growth, cultural development, public safety, and community health and wellbeing.

7. Do you agree or disagree with the overarching objective of a consistent, transparent licensing system which empowers local authorities while promoting economic growth, cultural development, public safety and community wellbeing? *

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer: The Licensing Objectives do not currently focus on the promotion of economic growth or the benefits of licensed premises to the business or the wider community. Given that economic growth was one of the original principles behind the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 it would be beneficial for its consideration to be given a statutory footing.

8. Do you agree or disagree that promoting economic growth should be a statutory licensing objective alongside the existing public safety objectives?

A statutory objective is one that is defined in law and that licensing authorities are required to consider. *

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know – It is the Council's view that it would be better placed within the proposed NLPF
- Prefer not to say

9. Do you think that the licensing regime should treat on-trade and off-trade premises differently in any respects in order to allow the differing challenges and opportunities they pose to be addressed? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer: Both on and off trades already must promote responsible consumption of alcohol by way of the mandatory conditions. The main difference is where the purchased alcohol is consumed and there is already a mechanism that exists to treat each premises on its own merits.

10. What priority themes should be included in a National Licensing Policy Framework? *

- Public safety and Crime Prevention
- Economic Growth and Reducing Business Burdens
- Culture & Community Cohesion
- Community Health and Wellbeing
- Supporting Growth, Highstreets and Night-Time Economies
- Others

List any other themes for inclusion: Public Health

11. How could the government assess whether national guidance is working effectively?

Please suggest ways we could measure if national guidance is making a positive difference.

- Growth in the size of the sector and number of businesses
- Lower rates of crime and ASB
- Lower rates of alcohol-related harm
- Fewer people appeal decisions
- Other (please tell us below)

Comment: Fewer contested applications that end up at Licensing Sub-Committee.

6. Licensing Condition Amnesty

The government's aim is to modernise and streamline licences for on-trade premises.

What is an amnesty on licensing conditions?

Most premises licences are granted indefinitely and include conditions that were considered reasonable and proportionate at the time they were added to the licence. There is an

established process for licence holders to request amendments or removal of these conditions.

Some of these conditions are treated as minor variations, small changes that do not significantly impact licensing objectives, and are typically subject to a light-touch review. However, some are treated as major variations, which are more significant changes, e.g. extending alcohol trading times, that require a more comprehensive review, equivalent to a new licence application. There is potentially some inconsistency across licensing areas as to what constitute major and minor variations and business owners are therefore reluctant to request any changes to their premises licences, including redundant licence conditions, in case it triggers a full licence review.

An amnesty would recognise that many licensing conditions—particularly those inherited from pre-2005 regimes—may no longer be relevant or proportionate and therefore the removal of which should be treated as minor variations. Importantly, an amnesty would operate within existing legislative powers and would not require new laws. The amnesty would not allow for blanket removal of conditions without review. It would focus on-trade premises (e.g. restaurants, bars, nightclubs), rather than off-trade premises (e.g. off-licences).

The government envisages a process whereby licence holders would be encouraged to prepare their proposed changes for discussion with their police licensing officer at the next scheduled premises visit or earlier by agreement. They would be able to take on board police advice on the appropriateness of the proposals and which of them may qualify as minor, before submitting their application to the licensing authority and advertising the proposed changes as required. Decisions must be made within 15 working days and the authority must approve the application unless it believes the changes could negatively impact the promotion of licensing objectives.

What are minor variations?

The Licensing Act 2003 does not define minor variations, however the following changes are not considered minor:

- Extending the duration of the licence
- Substantially altering the premises
- Adding the supply of alcohol
- Permitting alcohol sales between 11pm and 7am
- Increasing the hours during which alcohol may be sold or supplied

12. Do you agree or disagree that there should be an amnesty for licensing conditions as described above? *

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know – the minor variation process already exists and is used effectively to update premises licences as and when required.

- Prefer not to say

13. What would you see as the main benefits of an amnesty? [Tick all that apply]

Minor conditions are small changes that do not significantly impact licensing objectives.

- Removing minor conditions dating prior to 2005
- Removing minor conditions since 2005
- Removing non-minor conditions
- Reducing costs to businesses
- Reducing costs to consumers
- Reducing non-compliance with conditions
- Encouraging better relationships between premises and authorities
- Other
- None

If you answered 'Other' please specify: '*Non-minor*' conditions are by definition not minor and removal/amendment would likely have a negative effect on the promotion the licensing objectives. Therefore, should be subject to a full variation process to allow for a rigorous consideration of any proposals.

14. What challenges do you associate with an amnesty? [Tick all that apply]

- Costs to businesses in making applications
- Costs to local government and policing in reviewing and advising on applications
- Increased risks to public safety
- Increased risk of noise or public nuisance
- Increased risk of crime and disorder
- Challenges to protect children from harm
- Other
- None

If you answered 'Other' please specify: Unless the amnesty focuses on 'minor' conditions, then there is likely to be a negative impact upon the promotion of the licensing objectives. The Council are not sure of the efficacy of an amnesty if the proposal is to deal with the matters as

minor variations. That process already exists, and businesses can already benefit from this. The fee is £89.00 which is low irrespective of the size of the business.

15. It will be important to understand what counts as a minor variation when deciding what types of licence condition changes an amnesty could address. Can you provide your views? What do you think would be characteristic of a minor variation? You may give examples.

EXAMPLES

1. Minor changes to layout of a premises, including small increases in overall size of licensed area and/or movement of fixed structures etc;
2. Removal of out-of-date conditions;
3. Amendment of conditions to make them fit for purpose following a period of time, or a different business model;
4. To extend opening hours within the 'deregulated period' of 08.00hrs to 23.00hrs. E.g. a pub's premises licence allows it to be open to the public from 11.00hrs but they want to open to serve breakfasts from 08.00hrs.

7. Statutory Notice Requirements

Our aim is to look at ending the requirement for printed statutory notices for alcohol licences.

The Licensing Act requires that new premises licence applications or major changes to existing licences must be announced both in a local newspaper and on the premises. These statutory notices also apply to other local decisions, such as certain planning applications and road closures. The requirement to place statutory notices in printed local newspapers reflects the need to keep local people informed of decisions that may affect them but also provides a source of income for media companies. However, some licence applicants report significant and varying costs for advertising notices. This requirement applies to both on- and off-trade premises (e.g. both restaurants and bars, as well as retailers selling alcohol for consumption off the premises).

Local printed newspaper readership in England has steadily declined, with no daily titles and only five weekly titles circulating over 20,000 copies in 2024. The percentage of people accessing local news through print dropped from 23% to 9% over seven years. Conversely, the websites of these local news publishers reach around 37m people in the UK each month.

Alcohol notices are commonly reproduced on these sites as well as in print. The industry has launched a Public Notice Portal, which provides a centralised and interactive resource for all types of statutory notice, with plans underway to incorporate public consultation functionality to help public bodies and commercial entities engage with the public more effectively.

The Government recognises that local journalism is vital in supporting accountability and providing reliable local information. With ongoing devolution efforts and concerns about online disinformation, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is committed to supporting local journalism through a Local Media Strategy. Among other issues, this Strategy will include a

wider review of all types of statutory notice, which will also take forward final decisions on the future of alcohol licence notices.

16. Do you foresee any risks or benefits from removing the requirement to advertise alcohol licence notices in print local newspapers?

There are no risks. The benefit is that it will significantly reduce application costs to businesses.

17. What evidence do you have on the costs to business of publishing alcohol licence notices in local printed newspapers in your local area?

There is only one local newspaper in the area. As such they have a monopoly on the publication and associated costs of the notices. We are told that businesses regularly pay £400-500 per notice, which is the predominant cost associated with nearly every application.

18. Do you consider the costs associated with publishing statutory notices in local media are sufficiently transparent? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

19. In place of publication in print local newspapers, what alternative methods of publicising this information do you consider would be most effective in ensuring effective scrutiny, transparency and public awareness of licencing activities?

- Notices displayed in the vicinity of the licensed venue
- Online local news websites and/or the online Public Notice Portal
- Council websites, newsletters or social media channels
- Other

If you answered 'Other' please specify:

8. Outdoor Trading and Pavement Licences

The government's aim is to improve and simplify the current system for outdoor trading and pavement licences, removing barriers to using outdoor space while maintaining safeguards.

The government is seeking views on how the current system for outdoor trading and pavement licences operates, and how it might be improved to better support business growth whilst maintaining public safety. The Taskforce suggested some options, including to: simplify and extend pavement licence durations (e.g. minimum two years as a rule); remove outdated COVID-related conditions; clarify that alcohol in open containers (i.e. a drink poured into a glass) in licensed outdoor areas count as on-sales; promote best practice guidance to maximize outdoor trading; support seasonal flexibility; and encourage local authorities to adopt pragmatic approaches that boost economic activity.

20. Are you answering on behalf of a business who has or has had a pavement licence or traded outdoors? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

21. How long do you think pavement licences should be valid for?

Pavement licences let businesses like cafes put tables and chairs on the street. How long should these licences last before needing renewal? *

- 1 year
- 2-3 years
- 5 years
- Permanent (with occasional reviews)
- Other (please tell us below)

Comment: They should be the same as premises licences under the Licensing Act and have the facility to review when there are changes at the premises. If the premises also has a premises licence (under the Licensing Act 2003) then the Pavement Licence should need to be transferred when the licence holder changes. There should be the ability to vary/amend the pavement licence subject to reasonable consideration and a mechanism to review the licence (much like the review application within the Licensing Act 2003). However, if there is no expiry then there should be an annual maintenance fee, similarly to the Licensing Act 2003.

22. How can pavement licensing better support seasonal flexibility and temporary permissions (e.g. for music or sporting events)?

There could be non-standard timings/seasonal variations built into each licence, in a similar way to the Licensing Act 2003 to allow for seasonal flexibility. Temporary Event Notices can already be used to extend timings and/or areas for licensable activities.

23. Should alcohol in open containers (e.g. a drink poured in a glass) in pavement licence areas be treated as on-sales? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

24. Is guidance necessary to support best practice in outdoor trading? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Comment: Every local authority appears to deal with pavement licences and outdoor trading differently. There needs to be more consistency to benefit economic growth and provide confidence to the trade and assist local authorities in resourcing the administration of the licensing regime.

10. Temporary Event Notices (TENs)

Our aim is to make it easier for licensed premises to give notification of temporary events.

Temporary event notices (TENs) are a light touch notification process to allow for larger events or extensions to hours at premises which already have a licence. TENs are also for unlicensed premises to host an event that involves a licensable activity, but the Government is not currently consulting on any changes to those regulations.

Licensed premises can currently apply for a maximum of 15 TENs in one year for a total period of 21 days. The limit was increased during Covid, to 20 events over 26 days. This temporary increase in the number of days has since lapsed as the emergency Covid legislation is no longer in force. We are proposing permanently to increase the limit, in order to support venues hosting community events.

25. Do you support increasing the annual maximum number of TENs per licensed premises? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

26. Do you agree or disagree with increasing the annual maximum number of TENs to 20 events over 26 days (the same limit that applied during Covid)? *

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

27. What benefits or risks, if any, do you foresee if the maximum number of TENs is increased?

(Please provide examples or evidence where possible.)

The primary benefit will be to businesses/promoters to hold more events throughout the year and ensure they have the ability to be flexible within their business model. The main risk is an increase in workload for licensing authorities (and associated responsible authorities). Without an increase in the TEN fee, it would be even harder to resource within the limit capacity that LAs have.

28. Do you agree or disagree with retaining the 24 hour gap between temporary events at licensed premises? *

- Agree
- Disagree – there is no obvious benefit to retaining the limit.
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

29. What, if any, additional safeguards or changes would be needed if the TENs entitlement were increased?

TENs would benefit from a requirement for a plan to be submitted to accompany the proposed licensable area, especially if it is not a defined building already. As mentioned above the licensing authorities are currently running at below cost recovery with the low TEN fee.

30. Do you agree or disagree that conditions placed on premises licences should automatically transfer to TENs granted to those premises?

Conditions placed on premises licences currently do not automatically apply to TENs. This question asks whether you think they should in future. *

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know – It is difficult to say as conditions are added to premises on a case-by-case basis and tailored to specific licensable activities taking place at specific times. TENs will be used to extend times, activities or locations and the conditions on the existing licence may not be suitable.
- Prefer not to say

11. Blanket Policies and Core Hours

The government's aim is to prevent outdated restrictions remaining on businesses indefinitely.

Blanket policies, for example establishing core opening hours, are not reflected in the Licensing Act 2003. These can be placed on premises licences indefinitely, often based on historic concerns. Under the Licensing Act, licensing authorities are required to consult and publish a Statement of Licensing Policy every five years. The statutory guidance on statements of licensing policy (chapter 14, paragraph 51) also ensures that "licensing authorities must always consider each application and must not impose predetermined licensed opening hours, without giving individual consideration to the merits of each application".

Through this call for evidence the Government wants to explore the case for introducing requirements to ensure any blanket policies that restrict certain licensed activities within a specific or local authority area, are proportionate. This could include, for example, the need to undertake an assessment to ensure any blanket approach is proportionate, requirements to set timeframes for blanket policies and to monitor impact, or a requirement to review impact before terminating or extending the policy. This may include blanket policies that apply to off-trade premises as well.

31. Do you agree or disagree that blanket policies should be subject to regular review or sunset clauses? *

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know – The Council do not operate blanket policies on opening times and have no experience of them.
- Prefer not to say

If there were regular reviews, what timeframe would be appropriate?

Every 5 years to fall in line with the Licensing Act 2003 policy.

32. Are there any existing data or evidence sources you would recommend authorities use to assess the impact of a blanket policy before it is extended or terminated?

Currently - Police data, ASB data, complaint data from responsible authorities. In the future, public health data.

33. Does the local authority area you operate in have any special licensing policies — for example, core hours, late-night levy schemes or other locally applied conditions?

This question asks whether you live or work in an area with special licencing policies. Please tell us if any special policies apply in your local area. *

- Yes – Newcastle-under-Lyme has a Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) area.
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

If you answered 'yes', how has it affected your business or community?

The CIA has placed more onus on applicants to ensure that they have considered the licensing objectives prior to submitting the application. It provides a 'slicker' process for ensuring that responsible authorities are engaged earlier in the process.

12. Evidence and Data Protocol

Our aim is to ensure that evidence and data needed for licence reviews and objections are objective and transparent.

We are considering developing a national protocol to standardise evidential requirements, promote mediation and clarify objection procedures. One approach, for example, would be to give licensing officers more influence in the licensing process in a similar way to planning officers. Any changes would be intended to reduce costly disputes, improve transparency and ensure decisions are proportionate and legally sound.

34. The Proximity Test. Paragraph 8.13 of the section 182 guidance states that any individual or business entitled to make representations may do so “regardless of their geographic proximity to the premises”. Should there be a requirement for individuals and businesses who make representations in favour or against a licence application to be in geographic proximity to the premises? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't know – When the Licensing Act 2003 was first implemented there was a 'vicinity' test, which was then removed. The Council have not found any discernible difference in the number of representations received since the amendment. As such the Council offer no strong views either way.
- Prefer not to say

35. Objections. Paragraphs 9.4 to 9.10 of the s.182 guidance seek to prevent irrelevant, vexatious or frivolous representations. Does this mechanism successfully eliminate such representations? *

- Yes – for the most part as there is officer discretion to investigate the validity of these already.
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

If you answered 'no' please comment on what more could be done to minimise such representations?

36. Improve Evidential Standards. Should there be a requirement that representations opposing a licence present the case and evidence for harms to one or more of the licensing objectives? In other words, only representations stating that there is an objection concerning the licensing objectives would count. *

- Yes – for the most part representations do mention the specific licensing objective/s to which the comments relate, and this assists in making clear the reason for the objection. However, it must be stated that the licensing objectives are preventative in nature and brand new applications and business models may not have any evidence to confirm that they will definitely be a problem. It should remain sufficient that a concerned person should be able to object providing they give appropriate reasoning.
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

37. Necessary and Proportionate Test. Should there be a test applied to examine whether licensing conditions are necessary and proportionate? *

- Yes – Licensing authorities should be applying this test already when imposing conditions via a Sub-Committee decision, or when ensuring volunteered conditions on operating schedules are fit for purpose.
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

38. Do you agree or disagree that the decisions of a licensing officer should carry greater weight with the licensing committee?

This question asks whether a licensing officer should have the status of an 'independent arbiter' whose decisions carry greater weight than those of other parties. *

- Agree – Licensing Officers are the experts in the area and act on behalf of the local authority. Officers in this authority already offer recommendations in relation to other licensing regimes, and make decisions where duly authorised.
- Disagree

- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

39. How should informal mediation and resolution be encouraged at the start of the process of making representations?

Applicants should be referred to the relevant responsible authorities prior to submitting applications. This resolves the majority of concerns; allows for a simpler consultation period and licences can be issued more quickly.

13. Festivals and Events

The government aims to support investment in festivals and community events, such as outdoor events which may include the sale of alcohol.

Licensing affects the festivals and events sectors and the government is interested to understand where there may be scope to support these sectors through a more effective, and lighter touch approach to licensing.

A key proposal raised by the Licensing Taskforce was whether to enable longer-term or perpetual licences for recurring festivals and events to support investment and planning. This call for evidence is interested in understanding views on how far any changes could foster stability and growth in the festivals and events sectors.

40. Do you support enabling longer-term or perpetual licences for recurring festivals and events? *

- Yes – this already exists. Premises licences are all perpetual unless they have specifically been restricted by the applicant. If events take place under these licences and they cause problems, then the existing review mechanism should be used.
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

41. Would evidence of a safe and successful event held in previous years be sufficient evidence in most cases for granting licence extensions for repeat events? *

- Yes
- No

- Don't know – As stated above, licences are for the most part perpetual. There should not be a need to re-apply for a new licence on a regular basis.
- Prefer not to say

42. What else could be done to help promote long term investment in, and planning of, events?

Conditions could be added, either mandatory or not, that provide those events of a specific nature (i.e. large-scale music festival with live artists) must provide notification to responsible authorities at an appropriate time in advance of the event and/or state minimum standards that are expected to be implemented into any event management plan that is created. There could also be industry guidance on what nature and size of events require the creation of a Safety Advisory Group (SAG), the timescales for doing so and the responsibilities of the relevant parties.

14. Agent of Change Principle

The Government is considering how the Agent of Change (AoC) principle is currently applied in licensing to better protect existing licensed premises (including theatres, music and sporting venues) and residents.

What is the Agent of Change Principle?

The AoC principle places the responsibility for mitigating impacts from existing noise-generating activities on any new development. For example, if a developer plans to build new homes near an existing music venue, the developer is responsible for mitigating any potential problems, e.g. installing soundproofing.

The principle is already embedded into the planning system. The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that where the operation of an existing business could have a significant adverse effect on new development in its vicinity, the applicant (or 'agent of change') should be required to provide suitable mitigation before the development has been completed.

The Licensing Act 2003 is intended to give local licensing authorities the ability to consider a variety of local factors when taking licensing decisions. While the actions of authorities are expected to promote the four statutory licensing objectives, the regime seeks to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. It recognises that different communities face different challenges. Local licensing authorities are able to incorporate the Agent of Change principle into their statements of licensing policy if they consider it necessary or useful to do so. However we want to understand how this is currently being considered as part of licensing decisions, how effective it is, and whether it would be beneficial to strengthen this approach.

43. Should the licensing regime give greater weight to the Agent of Change principle? *

- Yes

- No
- Don't know – The onus on the Agent of Change principle is that the incoming development is responsible for suitable mitigation. Developments should be stopped in their planning phase if they have not suitably mitigated against risks of nuisance. At the heart of this is the planning framework and the need for suitable pre-assessment of proposed developments. Licensing Officers and Sub-Committees need to be aware of the principle, particularly when dealing with complaints and/or representations in order they can attach suitable weight to the concerns raised.
- Prefer not to say

15. Hospitality, Leisure & Cultural Zones

Designating zones to preserve economic and cultural activity is something that has been used successfully in the UK by local authorities, and also overseas, for example in New South Wales. The Government would like to explore how zoning might be used by local authorities in hospitality, leisure and cultural areas to help develop, preserve and manage vibrant night-time economies, while continuing to protect local communities.

The Government would therefore like to use this Call for Evidence to help inform early policy development in this area.

44. Are there recognized examples of effective practice in the UK that could contribute to the development of policy and guidance for local authorities?

Not that the Council are aware or have experience of.

45. Should there be a requirement for local authorities to consult with local businesses, enforcement agencies and local residents on the creation of zones? *

- Yes – if cultural zones are to be created the relevant stakeholders would require consultation, and their views taken into account, presumably alongside guidance or the proposed NLPF.
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

46. What existing or new licensing or planning mechanisms could be used by local authorities to develop and manage zones?

There would have to be a new licensing or planning mechanism created and would have to be balanced with Cumulative Impact Assessments (CIAs), Public Space Protection orders (PSPOs) and similar provisions. It would require suitable guidance for all stakeholders.

47. What indicators might be appropriate for local authorities to assess the impact of zones?

Types of business model, how long the premises have been conducting their activities, whether there are CIAs or PSPOs in place, if there are suitable existing transport links in place, how many of the premises fall within the standard or enhanced tiers within the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025.

48. Are there documented cases where local authorities have effectively used planning or licensing mechanisms to influence the business mix within specific zones?

Not that the Council are aware or have experience of.

16. Impacts – crime, public health, local authorities, equality

49. Which, if any, of the Licensing Taskforce recommendations do you expect to place the most significant burden on licensing authorities' capacity and ability to fulfil their usual function? *

- National Licensing Policy Framework
- Licensing Condition Amnesty
- Remove Newspaper Advertising Requirement
- Outdoor Trading and Pavement Licences
- Increase TENs Entitlement
- Sunset Clause on Blanket Hours
- Arbitration, Evidence and Data Protocol
- Festivals and Events Licensing
- Agent of Change Principle
- None
- Don't know

- Prefer not to say

What measures would you suggest putting in place to mitigate any impact?

The fees associated with the Licensing Act 2003 **must be reviewed as a matter of urgency**, and in any event, prior to any of the large changes being proposed by the Taskforce. None of the fees have been amended in the last 20 years leaving Council's unable to fully cost recover the resource required to administer the regime. There was a recent 'informal consultation' from the Home Office to discuss fee levels, but this does not appear to have been progressed. Below is a brief list of the most common fees, what they are for, and an approximate equivalent now based on cumulative inflation rises since 2005:

- £21.00 – TENs - £43.47;
- £23.00 – Vary DPS and Transfers - £47.71;
- £37.00 – Personal Licence application - £76.59;
- £100.00 – Band A application fee – £207.00;
- £190.00 – Band B application fee – £393.00;
- £315.00 – Band C application fee – £652.05

50. In your view what impact will the proposals for reform included in this Call for Evidence have on public safety or crime? *

- Very positive
- Positive
- None
- Negative
- Very negative
- Don't know – The contents of the proposed NLPP would be key in determining what effects may result from the changes.
- Prefer not to say

51. Which, if any, of the reforms described in this Call for Evidence, in your view, pose public safety or crime concerns? *

- National Licensing Policy Framework
- Licensing Condition Amnesty
- Remove Newspaper Advertising Requirement
- Outdoor Trading and Pavement Licences
- Increase TENs Entitlement

- Sunset Clause on Blanket Hours
- Arbitration, Evidence and Data Protocol
- Festivals and Events Licensing
- Agent of Change Principle
- None
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Why do you think this?

Cultural zones would likely bring in large number of the public. Where there are large groups of people in a relatively confined area there is an increased risk of crime such as thefts and assaults occurring and being a target for terrorist or mass casualty incidents.

52. In your view what impact will the proposals for reform included in this Call for Evidence have on public health? *

- Very Positive
- Positive
- None – unless the proposed NLPF specifically deals with Public Health and it's involvement within the regime.
- Negative
- Very Negative
- Don't Know
- Prefer not to say

53. Which, if any, of the reforms described in this Call for Evidence, in your view, pose public health concerns. *

- National Licensing Policy Framework
- Licensing Condition Amnesty
- Remove Newspaper Advertising Requirement
- Outdoor Trading and Pavement Licenses
- Increase TENs Entitlement
- Sunset Clause on Blanket Hours
- Arbitration, Evidence and Data Protocol

- Festivals and Event Licensing
- Agent of Change Principle
- None
- Don't know - The contents of the proposed NLPF would be key in determining what effects may result from the changes.
- Prefer not to say

Why do you think this?

54. In reforming the licensing system to promote economic benefits, what measures can be taken to promote public health?

Reviews can be undertaken of Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) introduced in Wales and Scotland to assess the benefits that has had on public health.

55. Does this call for evidence raise any equalities concerns such as disproportionate impacts on particular demographic groups? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know
- Prefer not to say

Why do you think this?