
Licensing Sub-Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 17 December 2025 from 11.11 am - 4.07 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Derek Carnell (Chair), Lee-Anne Moore and Tony Winckless.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Alona Diachenko, Kellie MacKenzie, Jo Thomas and Helen Ward.

OFFICER PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Steph Curtis.

580 Emergency Evacuation Procedure

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

581 Notification of Chair and Outline of Procedure

The Chair opened the meeting and asked those present to introduce themselves.

582 Declarations of Interest

Helen Ward, the Senior Lawyer (Contentious), declared an interest as she was a Monitoring Officer for Kent Medway Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor Lee-Anne Moore declared an interest as she worked in a public house in Queensborough.

583 Review of Premises Licence under the Licensing Act 2003

The Licensing Team Leader clarified that there were an error, in paragraph 3.2 on page 4 of the report, which stated that on the 6 May 2025 the Director of The Charles Royal Hotels Ltd, Mr Ramesh Rajathurai applied to vary the Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS) and appoint himself in that role. This date was incorrect and should read the 6 March 2025.

The Licensing Team Leader introduced the report which asked Members to consider a review of premises licence granted under the Licensing Act 2003 made by Chief Inspector Vanessa Foster on behalf of Kent Police in respect of The Royal Hotel, 29 Broadway, Sheerness, ME12 1AB. The Licensing Officer reminded Members that the review had been requested for failing to promote the following licensing objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder; the protection of public safety; and, the prevention of public nuisance.

The Licensing Team Leader referred to the review application as set out at Appendix II of the report. She explained that as part of the review, the Applicant requested that the Sub-Committee to consider revoking the premises license.

She reported that when the review application was received there was the statutory 28-day consultation period during which the responsible authorities, as well as interested parties, had the opportunity to comment on the application. In this case, the Kent Fire and Rescue Service representative had made comments on the grounds of failure to promote the public safety licensing objective, and this was set out at Appendix III of the report. Additional information provided by the Kent Fire and Rescue Service representative was set out at Appendix IV of the report.

The Licensing Team Leader said Kent Police Licensing provided supporting documents, CCTV and audio files which had been circulated to Members and the Premises License Holder. Some of this evidence related to incidents that were part of ongoing Police investigations. These documents were marked as confidential and were exempt from public disclosure by reason that they contained information under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, there was information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

The Chair asked the Kent Police Licensing Officer, PC 11250 Andre Smuts to present his statement.

The Kent Police Licensing Officer outlined their reasons for calling for the review he said Kent Police had lost faith that the new owners were capable of operating the premises, due to instances of assault, drug use, and license breaches since taking on the hotel. He explained the six incidents that were set out in the report.

The Kent Police Licensing Officer reported that the Premises Licence Holder had not responded to contact made by the Police and the previous Premises Licence Holder concerning an incident in December 2024. He outlined the six incidents from 14 December 2024 until 21 May 2025 that were set out in his supplementary pack.

584 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

At this point, following a request from Kent Police to show some CCTV evidence, Members took a vote on whether to inspect the CCTV footage in closed session.

Resolved:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Schedule of 12A of the Act:

- 1. Information relating to any individual.***
- 2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.***

The Kent Police Licensing Officer showed Members the CCTV footage.

The Chair then asked Members to vote on whether the meeting should revert back into open session. This was agreed by Members.

The Kent Police Licensing Officer continued to present his statement referring to his supplementary pack which had been circulated to all interested parties. He reported that a number of incidents had been reported to the Police by residents. He explained that in his view the Premises Licence Holder had not taken appropriate steps in response to the incidents, and had not notified the Police.

The Kent Police Licensing Officer considered that the Premises Licence Holder demonstrated a lack of cooperation with the Police. He stated that the Police had, prior to instigating the Review, provided informal advice to the Premises Licence Holder, including onsite meetings to provide guidance, including on the use of SIA door staff, which had not been actioned until after the Review had been instigated.

He mentioned that training and training records historically were not satisfactorily being complied with. He said that there was no signage restricting the sale of alcohol to customers that were already intoxicated with alcohol.

The Kent Police Licensing Officer reported regarding allegations of drug use in the premises, they considered that there was credible evidence of persons at the premises in possession of drugs and they were satisfied on the balance of probabilities that drug paraphernalia had been found at the premises.

At this point, following a request from Kent Police to show some CCTV evidence, Members took a vote on whether to inspect the CCTV footage in closed session.

Resolved:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Schedule of 12A of the Act:

- 1. Information relating to any individual.***
- 2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.***

The Chair invited Members of the panel and all parties to ask questions to the Police.

The Premises Licence Holder's representative asked regarding outcomes of the Police investigations.

In response, the Kent Police Licensing Officer was unable to provide any information regarding outcomes of the incidents contained in the Review because he was not involved with the investigations. He explained to Members that he included all the instances that he discussed because they added weight to their opinion that the premises was attracting violent instances, some of which the premises had not reported.

Following the adjournment of the meeting, the Chair invited the Kent Fire and Rescue Service representative to make their statement.

The Kent Fire and Rescue Service representative provided evidence to the Licensing Sub-Committee and explained that they had visited the premises on 24 April 2025, they reported that a number of matters had not been complied with and this was set out at Appendix III and IV of the report:

The Kent Fire and Rescue Service representative reported that following a request by the Premises Licence Holder a 12 week extension to comply with the enforcement notice and that would expire on 20 January 2026.

The Chair invited Members of the panel to ask the Kent Fire and Rescue Service representative questions.

A Member asked why safety fire regulations appeared not to have been carried out by the Fire Service which basically was a requirement for operating the premises.

The Kent Fire and Rescue Service representative made it clear to Members that the issues that had been identified under the Enforcement notice needed to be complied with by a set time. They would not necessarily have restricted the whole building, it would be certain part of the building, but it had a working fire alarm. If it had not, they would not have allowed the hotel to be used, the bar would have been able to stay open because it was on the ground floor.

A Member sought clarification about when the previous inspection had been carried out at the premises. The Kent Fire and Rescue Service representative reported that it would have been at least three years previously because of the risk based inspection. The Chair invited the Premises Licence Holder's representative to present their case.

The Premises Licence Holder's representative addressed the Sub-Committee and said the following:

- He expressed his concern about how the Police had presented their case, including inaccuracies regarding the number of bags found in the toilet cistern. This error was corrected in evidence prior to the hearing and at the hearing;
- there was no evidence that their clients had permitted or allowed drug use at the premises and the CCTV that had been seen by all parties earlier where the Police suggesting somehow the DPS or his son would have been able to smell or see cannabis;
- a proper analysis was needed if there were any drugs on the premises, there was no evidence that drugs were taken at the premises;
- in relation to the incident on 31 May 2025, there were no witness statements, or any understanding of how it happened, why it happened. Their client had offered first aid to the victim, but he did not want it and went away and came back later;
- their training records were updated on the second visit, but the Police said that they still were not sufficient;
- the premises was now using a system called 'Licensing Connect' which had a refusal register incident book and all staff had been trained on the licensing connect system;
- since the review the premises had engaged with door supervisors, it cost them £400 a weekend; at this moment there was no need to have a doorman because of low numbers of people on the premises; they were prepared to have a doorman if they had more than 50 customers on the premises. In the evening when they did not have a door supervisor, they would ensure that a personal licence holder would be present.
- the Premises Licence Holder had spent £120,000 on the premises although this was later established to be primarily on the lease with a further £20,000 on the refurbishment;
- they had through the whole year, there were only two people had been found with drugs on their person, there was no evidence of drug use; and
- raised concern about how the media coverage of the review had had a negative impact on their business.

The Chair invited Members of the panel and officers to ask the Premises Licence Holder's representative questions.

They asked how the Premises Licence Holder would manage the issue with a door supervisor if there would be more than 50 customers on the premises.

In response, the Premises Licence Holder's representative said that they would not allow any new admittance once there were 50 customers, and a door supervisor or a member of the staff would be policing the door.

The Senior Lawyer (Contentious) asked who would be ensuring only 50 customers entered the premises and how would they monitor numbers unless there was someone permanently stationed at the door.

The Premises Licence Holder's representative responded that there would be someone that could count to 50, such as the Personal Licence Holder, the Premises Licence Holder or the DPS.

A Member raised concern regarding the anti social behaviour at the premises and outside that they had viewed on the CCTV evidence from the Police

The Premises Licence Holder's representative suggested assessing the situation comprehensively and not looking at each incident separately. From the beginning of 2025 until 17 December 2025 they had only seven incidents occurring.

A Member referred to condition 6 of the license that stated that the Licence Premises Holder should put in place training within six weeks of employment. New employees would be supervised until training had taken place; refresher training every six months; and she underlined that the Licence Premises Holder had not provided evidence of training.

The Premises Licence Holder's representative informed that they had training, but according to the Police opinion it was not adequate, they had then held additional training and ensured the book was signed however the Police said that it was still not adequate enough as training.

The Senior Lawyer (Contentious) asked when the CCTV had been made available to the Police following incidents.

The Premises Licence Holder's representative made it clear to the Sub-Committee that they had not previously known how to download the CCTV recording as the Police had previously used their own USBs and downloaded it. He confirmed that the Premises Licence Holder was now able to download the CCTV.

The Kent Police Licensing Officer considered that the Premises Licence Holder had only started applying improvements since they had called the review.

The Kent Police Licensing Officer confirmed a few suggestions:

- SIA that they were now employing should be mandated for Friday and Saturday night until 30 minutes after closing time;
- no glasses or bottles allowed outside of the premises;
- a written drug policy to be provided to the Police upon request;
- a monitoring system of the toilets which had been documented as in more frequent visits which they already putting in place;
- the disable toilets were kept locked unless someone requested the key;
- 23:00 and 23:30 hours closing to the public;
- zero tolerance drug policy, signage to be displayed
- a current training record to be amended to include a nationally recognised licensing training course as opposed to just training;
- a change of DPS;
- a Personal License Holder to be on premises during licensable activities.

The Kent Fire and Rescue Service representative informed that following the Kent Fire and Rescue Service visit on 12 November 2025 the Premises Licence Holder were still outstanding on fire safety training, fire safety procedures and drills and evacuation. There was no doors replaced, the basement ceiling had not been repaired. She asked if the Premises Licence Holder replaced all doors, floors, walls, ceilings that needed doing.

The Premises Licence Holder explained that they had to get permission from the landlord to change anything in the building as per their lease agreement and they had got the permission, and they were working with them to get doors and ceilings completed 20 January 2026.

At this point, following a request from Kent Police to show some CCTV evidence, Members took a vote on whether to inspect the CCTV footage in closed session.

Resolved:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Schedule of 12A of the Act:

- 1. Information relating to any individual.***
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The Chair invited final statements and closing words.

The Chair informed that the Sub-Committee was going to adjourn to make the decision.

The decision notice is attached to the online version of these minutes.

Resolved:

- (1) That the premises licence be revoked, pursuant to s.52 Licensing Act 2003.**

585 Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned from 12.55 pm until 1.50 pm.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel