

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Licensing & Gambling Acts Casework Sub-
Committee
on Monday 13 October 2025**

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Committee members present:

Councillor Miles

Councillor Ottino

Councillor Rehman

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Alison Daly, Legal Advisor

Richard Masters, Senior Licensing Compliance Officer

John Ali, Licensing Compliance Officer

80. Election of Chair for the hearings

Councillor Rehman proposed Councillor Miles as Chair; Councillor Ottino seconded.

Councillor Miles was elected as chair for the duration of this hearing.

81. Apologies for absence

None.

82. Declarations of Interest

None.

83. Procedure for the hearing

The Sub-Committee noted the relevant procedure for the hearing.

The Chair explained the procedure for the meeting and reminded public attendees that it was recommended that their combined speaking time total to no more than approximately 20 minutes.

84. Application for a New Premises Licence - Pihu Enterprises Ltd, 67 Botley Road, Oxford, OX2 0BS

The Chair invited all attendees to introduce themselves.

The Senior Licensing Compliance Officer presented a summary of the report in relation to an application submitted by Pihu Enterprises Ltd for a new premises licence in respect of 67 Botley Road, Oxford.

The key matters for consideration included:

- The applicant's request for the sale of alcohol from 05:00 to 23:00 daily
- The conditions imposed by Thames Valley Police
- Numerous representations from local residents

Members were reminded of their duties when considering the application and of the possible decision they may take, including to:

- Grant the licence in accordance with the application.
- Modify the conditions of the operating schedule by altering or omitting or adding to them.
- Exclude or restrict from the scope of the licence any of the licensable activities to which the application relates.
- Reject the whole of the application.

Finally, the Sub-Committee understood that they may also grant the licence subject to different conditions for different parts of the premises or the different licensable activities.

The Chair thanked the Senior Licensing Compliance Officer and invited questions from the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Rehman sought to clarify that the sale of alcohol was the only licensable activity relevant to the Sub-Committee's considerations; the Senior Licensing Compliance Officer confirmed this.

The Chair queried whether the concerns from the public regarding vapes, as in the report, could be considered by the Sub-Committee. If so, it was asked what regulations would cover this and how they linked to the licensing objectives. Furthermore, the Chair also acknowledged that the public objections focused on the premises' proximity to schools and asked what weight this should be given in the Sub-Committee's deliberations. Finally, it was asked whether consideration of parking concerns was within the scope of the Sub-Committee's deliberations. The Senior Licensing Compliance Officer explained that parking cannot be considered as it does not relate to one of the licensing objectives; at this time the licensing objectives were summarised for the benefit of all attendees. Regarding vapes, the Senior Licensing Compliance

Officer also explained that currently no licence is required by law, and Trading Standards have noted that there are no restrictions on who can sell vapes or how they are displayed. The Sub-Committee were provided a summary of the progress of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill which is currently progressing through Parliament: it was noted that this could alter the requirement for licenses to sell vapes in the future, but it is not yet something which the Sub-Committee should consider. Finally, regarding proximity to schools, the Senior Licensing Compliance Officer suggested that this could connect to the licensing objective in relation to the protection of children from harm if children were encouraged to enter and attempt alcohol purchases, but location and proximity to the premises was more relevant to the licensing of Sex Establishments under the Miscellaneous Provisions Act.

The Chair asked whether antisocial behaviour and congregation of people should be considered, and if so, how much weight should be applied to this if the matter does not occur within the premises itself. The Senior Licensing Compliance Officer explained that licence holders hold responsibility for the vicinity around their premises, but not beyond this. As such, they cannot be considered as responsible for antisocial behaviour and congregation of people as they cannot entirely control it. It was however recommended that premises take steps to reduce occurrences of this where possible by using signage, for example.

The Chair invited questions from the Legal Advisor; there were none.

The Chair invited questions from the applicants; there were none.

The Chair invited the applicants to present their case. Mrs. Mansi Chowdhry and Mr. Tapan Chowdhry were in attendance to present their application to the Sub-Committee.

Mrs. Chowdhry addressed the Sub-Committee and explained that she intended to provide more information regarding the application and did not wish to force the business on the local community. She noted that whilst the application may look uninviting to residents, she hoped that the detail being provided during this meeting would reduce this. The Sub-Committee heard that the premises would be a franchise of Nisa Local and the application for this was accepted based on local demographic data. It was noted that no other small convenient stores currently exist in the area, and therefore they intend to serve the community, specifically the older populations. Mrs. Chowdhry clarified that around 80% of their sales would be grocery products, and therefore less than 20% would be from alcohol or tobacco products. In reference to the objections listed within the report relating to premises' opening hours, Mrs. Chowdhry noted that based on her research of the area, she felt that the hours would accommodate the professionals who commute, as well as local traders who work early hours. It was noted that they intend to serve these groups convenience groceries and meals.

The Chair thanked Mrs. Chowdhry and invited questions from the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Ottino asked whether Mrs. Chowdhry had read and accepted the conditions listed by Thames Valley Police in the report. This was confirmed, and the Sub-Committee were informed that the applicant had engaged in detailed dialogue with the police and agreed the conditions following this. Mrs. Chowdhry also noted that the police had observed how their other premises in Oxford operates and noted no incidents of selling alcohol to underage persons. Finally, Mrs. Chowdhry noted that they have often helped the police on other local matters and worked cooperatively with them to provide CCTV when required.

Councillor Ottino noted his understanding of their desire to open at 5AM but asked whether they would be willing to adjust the hours of their alcohol licence to later in response to the objections. Mrs. Chowdhry explained that she was not aware that the hours of the licence could vary from the premises opening hours. Therefore, she aligned these on the application form as necessary. It was noted that she would not expect alcohol to sell at this hour and emphasised that the business would not be pushing alcohol sales or relying on these; instead, they would be focusing on the sale of fresh and convenience grocery items.

Councillor Rehman asked how long they had owned the other shop, to which Mr. Chowdhry noted around three years, and Mrs. Chowdhry emphasised that he also holds 15 years of experience in consumer and market research.

Councillor Rehman, in the context of the other shop mentioned, asked how they have previously dealt with issues including behaviour of school children, for example. Mrs. Chowdhry noted that this is a national issue and explained that they train their staff to high standards, always check ID, and regularly log and decline the sale of alcohol to those underage. It was noted that children often attempt to purchase alcohol via an adult, however Mrs. Chowdhry is aware of this and is practiced at identifying the scenarios. Additionally, they are familiar and comfortable with declining sales to those already under the influence of alcohol. Mr. Chowdhry emphasised that they adhere to the correct requirements as it is not worth them risking illegal sales and jeopardising their businesses financially or ethically.

The Chair requested the name of the other business mentioned, to which Mr. Chowdhry noted *World Food and Wine* located in Templars Square. It was explained that the shop features two floors, the bottom being an off licence, and the upper floor selling world grocery products including Indian and Southeast Asian foods.

Councillor Ottino asked how the applicants intend to manage two shops simultaneously, and how often they would be present at the new shop. Mrs. Chowdhry explained that she and her husband live locally to Oxford and are very hands on with an equal approach to management between them. The Sub-Committee heard that staff are also trained by them directly, and they attend regularly to check the quality of operations.

The Chair noted the conditions from Thames Valley Police contained within the report.

The Chair invited the interested parties to present.

Councillor Muddiman noted her objection to the application in its current form and made an additional statement. The Sub-Committee heard the history of the shop at 67 Botley Road, the value it has held within the community over many years, and the likelihood of a new store opening in its place being welcomed by the community. However, Councillor Muddiman noted that the original application had raised significant concerns with residents due to the hours it listed for the sale of alcohol, tobacco, and vapes. On this basis, Councillor Muddiman explained that she met with Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry to discuss the matter and was reassured by their professionalism. As a result, she now holds fewer concerns and supports the opportunity for a local grocery shop to undercut Waitrose prices and to consider local needs. Councillor Muddiman noted the assurances she was provided that although Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry will not be present all the time, their trained staff will keep spirits and tobacco under the counter. Councillor Muddiman also welcomed the conditions set out by Thames Valley Police. However, the Sub-Committee heard her view that the long licensing hours are still inappropriate for the local area, and that there is little need to sell alcohol at such early hours of the day. It was also explained that there is a nearby temporary accommodation shelter for vulnerable women which includes recovering addicts, and other residents who are also in alcohol recovery. On this basis, Councillor Muddiman requested that the Sub-Committee consider a reduction in the licensing hours of the premises and suggested 8AM to 10.30PM instead. In concluding, Councillor Muddiman also noted the Tobacco and Vapes Bill and expressed a hope that the applicants may consider the future outcomes of this when designing how they currently display vapes.

Charlotte Smith thanked the applicants for the additional information provided during the meeting and noted that she was encouraged by their representation. The Sub-Committee heard a summary of the character of the local area, notably that it is close-knit, small, and quiet with churches, schools, and parks. Ms. Smith noted that she did not believe the area to require a new convenience store or off-licence and emphasised the excessive hours which had been applied for. She expressed more concern regarding the sale of alcohol in later hours of the day. The Sub-Committee also heard of a local issue with alcohol consumption and drug dealing in the park were informed of a specific example last summer which Ms. Smith had noted as making elderly persons and children feel unsafe. Whilst it was recognised that this would not be directly caused by a new off-licence, the presence of a place to purchase alcohol late at night could exacerbate the pre-existing issue. On this basis she asked the Sub-Committee to consider restricting the later hours of alcohol sales to support a reduction in the secondary sale of alcohol and to support management of public safety and nuisance. Ms. Smith noted the good intentions.

Councillor Pressel noted that following the information from the applicants during the meeting, she felt more reassured and commended their respectful and competent appearance presentation. She also noted that the shop could be an asset to the community and welcomed the conditions set out by Thames Valley Police. Councillor

Pressel noted that the applicants had promised not to directly display vapes and welcomed the option of also keeping spirits behind the counter. However, Councillor Pressel disputed the demographics of the area as presented earlier by applicants and noted that there is a hostel for homeless persons very locally to the premises. As such, it was observed that there are persons who may wish to purchase alcohol during early hours of the day and suggested that it would be beneficial to restrict the sale of alcohol, allowing sales only between noon to 9PM, for example. Councillor Pressel suggested that this would also reassure the many residents who held concerns regarding noise and behaviour in connection with alcohol. In concluding, Councillor Pressel welcomed the quality of training offered by the applicants to their staff but questioned how this could have already been achieved for new staff to the premises in question.

Angela Unsworth emphasised to the Sub-Committee that she does observe harm resulting from the sale of alcohol by small shops across the city and therefore commented that the hours listed in the this application were too long; she supported Councillor Pressel's suggestion of noon to 9PM. Concern that the owners are not local residents was also noted as reason for being unconvinced as to how it would be ensured that staff would adhere to procedures and orders. Finally, it was noted that an extra facility was not required given the existence of other similar shops. In summary, the Sub-Committee heard that the application is uninviting as it is likely that despite intentions, the premises would encourage additional alcohol sales.

The Chair thanked the interested parties for their representations.

The Senior Licensing Compliance Officer suggested that Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry respond to the matters raised by the interested parties.

Mrs. Chowdhry, in relation to placement of licensed products, explained that tobacco and cigarettes would be stored in a locked drawer under the counter and therefore would not be visible at all to customers. It was also noted that there would be no advertising or promotion of these products. Regarding alcohol, she explained that whilst this will be visible, it would be stored behind a closed door to the back counter which is locked. Furthermore, vapes will also be locked away behind the counter and only displayed low down next to the spirits meaning they would not be visible to kids. Mrs. Chowdhry noted that this mirrors that arrangement of sales for licensed products by Nisa stores and other national retailers.

The Senior Licensing Compliance Officer clarified that off sales would normally align with the trading hours of the premises and referred to section LH8 of the Council's policy unless valid representations were received in relation to potential public nuisance, which was the case in this instance. On this basis it was clarified that licensing hours can differ to trading hours if deemed appropriate.

Mr. Chowdhry further explained that both he and his wife are from professional backgrounds and entered retail 3 years ago. During this time, they have successfully

managed a store along parenting duties and are experienced at training staff. The Sub-Committee were informed that training of staff for the new shop is already underway and that they will both attend the new premises a lot at the beginning to ensure processes are being followed. Furthermore, two of the staff moving to this store have already worked for them for over 2 years and are sponsored on the licence. It was clarified that the new shop will be staffed by those from the existing store on a rotational basis and this has been deemed appropriate for allowing the business the capacity to expand. Finally, Mrs. Chowdhry noted her trust of their employees and assured the Sub-Committee that staff are continually retrained. Alongside this, when not present at the store, she and Mr. Chowdhry are able to monitor events via live sales systems and CCTV.

Councillor Ottino asked the Senior Licensing Compliance Officer whether any limiting of licensable trading hours must be related to licensing objectives to which it was explained that licensable trading hours would usually align with opening hours, however this can deviate. The Sub-Committee were provided several examples of licensable hours for other comparable local premises.

Councillor Rehman asked the Senior Licensing Compliance Officer whether these hours match the opening hours; the information was not available.

Councillor Muddiman, on the permission of the Chair, noted that the opening hours of Waitrose do not match their licensing hours.

The Chair asked, given the concerns raised and clarifications from officers, would Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry would consider flexibility in their licensing hours.

Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry noted their recognition of the concerns raised by interested parties and reiterated that their business model is not focused on alcohol sales, so therefore they would be willing to limit their licensable hours to sit from 7am to 11Pm. They also noted confidence that their staff would uphold this.

The Chair invited summaries.

Mr. Chowdhry welcomed the discussion during the meeting and thanked the Sub-Committee for the forum. He noted that he and Mrs. Chowdhry had reached out to Councillor Muddiman and emphasised the ongoing conversations they had engaged in with the community. He concluded that if they do things right then they will be supporting the local customer base and supporting community wishes.

Councillor Muddiman thanked Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry for the additional information they provided during the meeting, noted the useful discussion, and reiterated her request for the hours of licensable trade of alcohol to be limited to between 8AM and 10.30PM.

Councillor Pressel thanked Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry but also reiterated her hope that the licensable hours of trade for alcohol be restricted further by the Sub-Committee.

Ms. Smith seconded Councillor Pressel's comments and supported a restriction of the sale of alcohol to between noon and 9PM, noting the number of objections submitted.

Angela Unsworth thanked Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry for their flexibility and welcomed them to community but also reiterated the concerns shared amongst the interested parties and urged the Sub-Committee to further restrict the licensable hours for the sale of alcohol.

To summarise, the Senior Licensing Compliance Officer referenced section 5.5 of the Council's policy for in relation to the hours of alcohol sales and reminded the Sub-Committee that each application must be considered on its own merit.

Mrs. Chowdhry made a final comment which noted that minimal objections were made in response to Waitrose' licensed hours which are similar to that enclosed within her application.

Mr. Chowdhry, Mrs. Chowdhry, the Senior Licensing Compliance Officer, the Licensing Compliance Officer, and all interested parties left the room to allow the Sub-Committee to deliberate.

The Sub-Committee deliberated in private.

Mr. Chowdhry, Mrs. Chowdhry, the Senior Licensing Compliance Officer, the Licensing Compliance Officer, and all interested parties rejoined the meeting.

The Chair welcomed all attendees back to the meeting and delivered the decision of the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee resolved to:

- **Grant the premises licence with a restriction to the off sales of alcohol.**

The Chair acknowledged the large number of objections received from residents in regard the application but explained that some matters raised within these were out of the scope which the Sub-Committee could consider. The Chair thanked Mrs. Chowdhry for her application and presentation during the meeting and noted her offer to restrict the sales of alcohol to occur between 7am and 11pm only. The Chair noted that in response to the concerns of the public and recognising these, the Sub-Committee had decided to restrict off sales of alcohol to between 7am and 11pm. It was also explained that this aligns to the hours of nearby stores. Finally, the Chair noted the Sub-

Committee's confidence in the professionalism of Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry and recognised their experience. It was clarified that the conditions agreed with Thames Valley Police and those in their operating schedule would be transposed onto the licence as means of promoting the licensing objectives.

The Chair also reminded Mrs. Chowdhry of her right to appeal the Sub-Committee's decision should she be dissatisfied.

Mr and Mrs. Chowdhry thanked the Sub-Committee and left the meeting.

The interested parties left the meeting.

85. Minutes

The Sub-Committee resolved to approve the minutes of the meetings of 30 June 2025, 3 July 2025, and 6 August 2025 as true and accurate records.

86. Confidential Minutes

The Sub-Committee resolved to approve the confidential minutes of the meetings of 30 June 2025, 3 July 2025, and 6 August 2025 as true and accurate records.

87. Dates of Future Meetings

The Sub-Committee noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6.15 pm and ended at 7.40 pm