

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee on Monday 22 September 2025



Committee members present:

Councillor Miles (Chair)	Councillor Waite
Councillor Lygo	Councillor Ottino
Councillor Upton	Councillor Jupp
Councillor Muddiman	Councillor Mundy (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Yeatman	Councillor Rehman
Councillor Taylor	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer
Alison Daly, Legal Advisor
Joshua Curnow, Licensing Team Manager
Katie Thorp, Supervising Senior Licensing Officer
Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Clarkson, Sanderson and Rawle sent apologies.

24. Declarations of interest

None.

25. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025 as a true and accurate record.

26. Addresses by members of the public

None.

27. Councillor addresses on any item for discussion

None.

28. Review of the Cumulative Impact Assessment and Special Saturation Policy

The Deputy Chief Executive for Citizens and City Services had submitted a report to review the Cumulative Impact Assessment and determine the Special Saturation Policy.

The Supervising Senior Licensing Officer introduced the report and provided a comprehensive summary.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Muddiman sought to clarify how many applications had been refused within the SSP in the previous licensing period. The Supervising Senior Licensing Officer confirmed that 120 new or variation applications were received, of which 52 were located within the Special Saturation Policy (SSP) and 8 were referred to a Sub-Committee for determination. Of these 8, only one had been refused; therefore, 51 of the 52 applications received, which fell within the SSP area, had been granted.

Councillor Ottino requested data on the impact of not having an SSP in place for the last five months, particularly relating to whether there were any changes to the numbers of applications received, granted, or refused. The Licensing Team Manager noted that only one application had been received just prior to the last Committee meeting at which time the policy was removed. The Committee heard that this application was approved and there had not since been any applications objected to on the grounds of the SSP, and no applications had been received since the SSP had not been in place.

Councillor Rehman queried whether conditions added to premises licences recently were lighter due to no SSP being in place. It was explained that the one application received during the recent period was when the SSP was still in place but that it had expired by the time of the relevant Sub-Committee; the conditions proposed were very robust.

Councillor Upton noted that a possible objection to the SSP could be that it prevents new applicants from coming forward, thus damaging Oxford's nighttime economy. However, evidence during the period without the SSP has not shown a flood of incoming applications and 51 out of 52 applications had still been approved. Therefore, Councillor Upton asked whether the argument still stood that an SSP prevents people applying for premises licences. The Licensing Team Manager noted that the number of applications received per year had remained similar since 2018. Councillor Upton queried the varied criteria an application must meet with and without an SSP, to which it was explained that each application is deemed on its own merits and what is reasonable between two applications may vary dependant on its unique case. It was also clarified that with an SSP, an application can be considered alongside data from the police and hospitals for example, when assessing the premises' impact. The

Committee understood that this data can then be used as support for an objection, something which cannot be done without an SSP.

Councillor Jupp noted that there had been no disruption to application flow since the SSP was introduced and asked whether there had been any change to the type of prospective businesses applying. The Licensing Team Manager explained that the Licensing Authority has no means to collect data of that nature as applications are not required to state the type of businesses they own, especially when not located within the SSP area. The Committee heard that licences may be used differently over time, or be transferred, and are therefore only indicative of the licensable activities which may be occurring within the premises.

The Chair invited the Committee to debate the recommendation and reminded Members of the requirement to consider the need to uphold the licensing objectives when reaching a decision.

The Chair clarified the procedure for the debate and confirmed that it would be necessary to make a recommendation to full Council.

Councillor Ottino acknowledged the evidence contained within the report but disagreed that it implied an SSP to be necessary, noting the possibility of an SSP to fulfil short fallings of police resources. Regarding page 22 of the report, Councillor Ottino noted that there had been no significant decrease in relevant crime in Oxford's top four LSOA's since the adoption of the previous SSP and referred to his experience of sitting on sub-committees which have determined premises license applications since the SSP was dropped. The Committee heard Councillor Ottino's belief that it can be challenging for applicants to justify the measures they will make to manage crime and disorder, and this difficulty can deter applications, thus damaging the nighttime economy. Finally, Councillor Ottino raised concern regarding the geographical areas included and excluded from the SSP as proposed.

Councillor Taylor requested clarification on whether the Committee could refer to other considerations and policy areas aside from the four licensing objectives during their debate. The Chair and Legal Advisor confirmed that the four licensing objectives, as listed with the report, are the statutory objectives of the Committee and it is the duty of Members to consider these. The Legal Advisor noted that Members would not be following their duty if they were to vote on matters other than the four licensing objectives, although can mention any matters they wish during the debate.

Councillor Taylor reflected on his awareness of an application submitted whilst the SSP was in place but brought to a Sub-Committee following it being dropped. The Committee heard that despite the thorough nature and quality of the application and commendation from the police, it was still objected to by the police based on the SSP. Councillor Taylor expressed concern that an SSP would allow applications to be

refused purely based on their location, and in fact harms the Council's ability to meet its own licensing conditions.

Councillor Muddiman sought clarification on Councillor Ottino's representation and noted her belief that, based on the evidence, an SSP does not discourage new applicants from proceeding. Furthermore, Councillor Muddiman also noted that the SSP is a tool which can be used to strengthen weaker applications. Finally, she expressed the view that any police objection would have to be supported by evidence and the CIA, therefore disputing Councillor Ottino's earlier observation that the SSP allows the police to make objections too easily.

The Chair requested clarification around the police's ability to object to applications with and without an SSP. The Licensing Team Manager clarified that the police could object on the grounds of the licensing objectives if they feel as though they are not going to be upheld based on the details of the application before them, regardless of an SSP. The Committee heard that the difference emerges through the breadth of objections which could be made with an SSP.

Councillor Rehman asserted his belief that the Council's main duty is to protect the public and supported the use of an SSP as means of achieving this. He noted that there should be a separate Cumulative Impact Assessments for the Cowley Road and City Centre areas, however emphasised that overall, having an SSP in place would be important for shifting the burden of proof from the Licensing Authority to the applicant.

In relation to the needs of vulnerable residents, the Chair emphasised the importance of considering the safety of women in high crime and disorder areas.

Councillor Jupp disputed that installation of an SSP would automatically result in reduced crime rates, noting that the evidence in the report does not demonstrate this to have been the case whilst the SSP was not in place during recent months. Secondly, Councillor Jupp emphasised that with or without an SSP, Sub-Committees may still refuse an application if they feel the licensing objectives would not be sufficiently upheld and the ability to decide on these grounds would not have been altered. Finally, Councillor Jupp noted concern with the repetitive nature of police objections to applications for premises licences. The Licensing Manager explained that the number of premises licensing within both SSP areas have remained largely the same over time. In relation to crime rates, the Committee heard that it is not the purpose of the SSP to reduce crime in a given area, but to prevent an application contributing negatively to areas that already have a higher crime rate. As such, crime rates in each area may fluctuate or stay the same with or with an SSP in place; the SSP seeks to urge any licences granted within a higher crime rate area to adopt more robust measures for reducing their role in contributing to crime.

Councillor Mundy expressed agreement with concerns relating to not having an SSP in place and suggested that the nighttime economy should not always be inherently

considered as causing increased crime rates. It was also however emphasised that violent crimes, especially against vulnerable persons including women, should be focused on significantly. Councillor Mundy suggested that a focus be paid by the Committee to supporting licensing and policies which encourage reduced crime rates and preventative measures.

Councillor Lygo queried whether, if the Committee were to reject the SSP as proposed, there would be scope for a review in 12 months. The Chair clarified that the CIA already presented the evidence required for making the policy decision relating to the SSP and confirmed that officers already monitor ongoing licensing data.

Councillor Rehman, in reference to the policy objectives and the requirement to protect the public, urged the Committee to vote in favour of the SSP. He also noted that there was no clear indication that scrapping the SSP would lead to a boost of business and premises applications.

Councillor Rehman proposed that the Licensing and Gambling Act Committee agree to adopt the Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2025-2028 including the recommendation to control cumulative impact by retaining a Special Saturation Policy covering City Centre and East Oxford areas.

When put to a vote, 5 members voted in favour, and 6 members voted against. The recommendation was voted against.

Councillor Upton left the meeting.

The Committee and Member Services Manager clarified with the Licensing Manager that the SSP had expired and therefore the decision of the Committee would need to propose an alternative recommendation to Council not to adopt the CIA and SSP.

Councillor Ottino proposed that the Committee agree not to adopt the SSP as proposed as they were not convinced that the evidence is sufficient for supporting the requirement for an SSP and felt that the licensing objectives can be upheld sufficiently without. Councillor Taylor seconded.

Councillor Upton rejoined the meeting.

When put to a vote, 6 members voted in favour, and 5 members voted against. The recommendation was agreed.

The Licensing and Gambling Act Committee resolved to:

1. **Consider** the report and Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2025-2028.
2. **Agree** not to adopt the proposed Special Saturation Policy 2025-2028 as, based on the cumulative impact assessment before them, the Committee were not of the opinion that the number of licensed premises within the City Centre and East Oxford areas is such that it is likely that granting further licences (or variation to licences) would be inconsistent with the licencing authorities duty to promote the licencing objectives.
3. **Recommend** to Full Council to not adopt the Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2025-2028 and the continued Special Saturation Policy covering City Centre and East Oxford areas.

29. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted the dates and times of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6.12 pm and ended at 7.28 pm

Chair
2026

Date: Monday 9 February

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.