

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 9 December 2025

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Peter Clark, Coleen De Freitas, Alistair Gordon, Loraine Rossati and Carolina Veres

Start / End Time: Start Time: 2.00pm
End Time: 3.50pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lloyd Briscoe, Lynda Guy, Robin Parker, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater, Tom Plater, Ceara Roopchand and Tom Wren.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 22 October 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 APPLICATIONS FOR FOUR TEMPORARY EVENT NOTICES AT THE ROYAL OAK PUB, STEVENAGE SG1 3RA

The Committee considered an application to determine four temporary event notices applied for by the Tenant of The Royal Oak PH, Walken Road, Stevenage.

The Council's Licencing Officer introduced the report to the Committee outlining the application which included four identical Temporary Event Notices (TENs) for events commencing on 12 December, 19 December, 26 December and 31 December 2025. Each notice proposed a live band in the main bar and sports bar areas, running from 7:00pm until 1:00am, with a capacity of 110 people. The events required authorisation of the sale of alcohol on and off the premises, regulated entertainment and late-night refreshments.

The Licencing Officer advised that the application had been accepted by the Licensing Authority on 26 November 2025, but representations had been received from Environmental Health in relation to all four notices.

It was noted that the Environmental Health Officer's primary concern was that granting the TENs would disapply the existing public nuisance safeguards contained in the current Premises Licence, thereby failing to promote the licensing objective of

preventing public nuisance.

Members were informed that the Premises Licence Holder, McMullen & Sons Ltd, had recently applied for and been granted a minor variation to the premises licence on 17 November 2025. This variation introduced tighter noise control measures in response to reports from local residents.

The Licencing Officer advised that the Committee may decide to:

- allow the licensable activities to proceed as set out in the notices.
- to impose one or more of the existing licence conditions on the Temporary event Notices (TENs), insofar as those conditions are not inconsistent with the proposed events; or
- conclude that the events would undermine the licensing objectives and therefore should not take place, in which case a counter notice may be issued. A copy of the current Premises Licence and Plan are attached at Appendix 1.

The Chair then invited Environmental Health to present their case.

The Environmental Health Officer highlighted key points from their evidence, noting that the Royal Oak had a long history of noise complaints. The premises was located close to residential properties and was not designed for amplified music.

It was noted that the Environmental Health Officer had discussions with the Premises Licence Holder, which resulted in a minor variation being granted on 17 November 2025. Shortly after, the Officer received further complaints that key conditions were not being complied with.

The Officer visited the premises on 25 November 2025, and noted the manager was unaware of the new licence. Officers noted improvements shortly after and acknowledged that the manager had taken procedures to introduce outdoor monitoring.

The Committee were informed that by granting the TENs, this would remove the licencing conditions during the event periods, which would undermine recent progress. Therefore, the Officer submitted objections on the grounds of preventing public nuisance and public safety. It was noted that by granting the TENs this would also temporarily remove key licence controls, including the 130-person capacity limit, and would allow up to 499 people on site, which would significantly exceed the fire safety recommendations.

To conclude the Officer expressed concern that the licence holder was not present at the hearing to explain why they were overriding their own conditions.

The Chair invited all parties to ask questions to the Environmental Health Officer.

In response to a question regarding why the TENs overrode existing licencing conditions, the Officer noted that they were originally intended as a light touch option

for unlicenced venues hosting occasional events, rather than for use by an already Licensed Premises.

The Environmental Health Officer noted that the limit on the TENs applied to the licensed area which was stated to be inside the Premises and did not include the outside space. If patrons therefore spilled out of the Premises into outside areas, the Premises License conditions would not apply.

It was noted that, under normal circumstances, the Premises were unlikely to reach the maximum attendance permitted by the Fire Service, however, live music events were likely to attract higher numbers.

It was further noted that the Committee had the authority to apply the Premises Licence conditions to the TENs, although this would depend on the Premises compliance with those conditions.

The Environmental Health Officer explained to the Committee that discussions had taken place with the applicant suggesting that they could withdraw their TENs and resubmit with conditions, but this option was declined.

The chair then invited Mr Burgess to present their case on behalf of the applicant.

Mr Burgess stated that the Premises had not experienced issues with TENs over the past 15 years and noted that they were originally unaware of how TENs worked. The Committee heard that the Premises had never had problems with the sound limiter, which had been set up by a former Council Officer. They had confirmed that music levels below 60db would not constitute as a nuisance, however they were now being told this was no longer accurate.

He stated that differing interpretations from various Environmental Health and Licencing Officers over the years had created confusion, with compliance and nuisance judged inconsistently. He confirmed that the Premises had made ongoing adjustments, including relocating the smoking shelter multiple times, but explained that closing the outside area was not viable for the business.

Mr Burgess reported that the Premises had previously applied for a minor variation and a revised noise limiter, but the Environmental Health Officer had subsequently objected. It was noted that a noise abatement notice had been issued in relation to an incident at 9:45pm, despite advice indicating such notices should not normally be issued before 11pm.

The Chair invited all parties to ask questions to Mr Burgess on behalf of the applicant.

In response to questions, Mr Burgess confirmed that although previous management had left, stable management remained in place, with Mr Burgess acting as the manager until Mr Gould's return. He explained he was the Operations Manager for Mr Gould's group of pubs, which all had experienced managers. He noted he had 12 years of experience and a detailed understanding of the licence conditions.

Mr Burgess confirmed he was attending as Mr Gould's representative and on behalf of the company.

The Committee raised questions which were responded by the Licensing Officer. It was confirmed that Mr Gould was the DPS for the Royal Oak and the tenant of McMullen & Sons Ltd, the Premises Licence Holder. The Officer advised that the four TENs had been submitted by Mr Gould, and that an extra TEN he submitted was rejected. This was due to the application had proposed applying all Premises Licence conditions except conditions 'f' (use of the sound limiter) and 'n' (staff supervision of the outdoor area).

The Chair invited all parties to sum up.

Environmental Health highlighted the long-standing management and compliance concerns at the premises, noting its sensitive location near residential properties and the need for clear, consistent management of the Premises Licence. It was noted that the acting manager was unaware of recently amended conditions.

Mr Godman advised that allowing the TENs would undermine licencing safeguards and questioned whether the Premises had the capacity to manage the required conditions. He therefore considered refusal as the most appropriate option.

Mr Burgess did not provide a closing summary.

It was **RESOLVED** that a counternotice would be served, preventing the four TENs proceeding.

REASON FOR DECISION

The Committee considered all written and oral representations, the Licensing Objectives, the Council's Licensing Policy, and statutory guidance.

The Premises' long history of noise complaints, including an abatement notice, and repeated failures to use the noise limiter during live events were noted. The Committee noted that the previous management had been unaware of newly amended licence conditions and that the TENs would remove important safeguards, including the Fire Safety Officers attendance limit.

The Committee was not confident that the licensed conditions would be complied with if imposed on the TENs, due to previous evidence and the further TEN which was submitted that sought to avoid specific noise-related conditions.

Therefore, given the ongoing history, risk to public safety and the lack of assurance around management and compliance, the Committee concluded that allowing the events to proceed would not promote the Licensing Objectives and would issue counternotices for all the TENs applications.

4 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR