



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EAST LoTHIAN LICENSING FORUM

1

WEDNESDAY 20 AUGUST 2025, 10AM
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON
& HYBRID MEETING SYSTEM

Forum Members Present:

Mr G Blaikie (Chair) (R)
Mr S Baxter
Ms K Harling
Stg S Miller (R)
Mr J Thayers (R)
Ms K Burke (R)
(R) = remote participant

Licensing Board Members Present:

Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor G McGuire

Council Officials Present:

Ms B Crichton

Visitors Present:

N/A

Apologies:

Mr A Podder

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT EAST Lothian LOCAL LICENSING FORUM AND LICENSING BOARD HELD ON 21 MAY 2025 & MATTERS ARISING

The minute was agreed as an accurate recording of the meeting. There were no matters arising.

2. POLICE REPORT (VERBAL)

Sergeant Stuart Miller gave an update on sixty recorded licensing incidents over the last three months, and provided a geographical breakdown of the incidents, of which: 17 took place in Tranent, 11 in Haddington, ten in Musselburgh, nine in Prestonpans, four in North Berwick, three in Dunbar, and the remainder took place in small villages. The incidents included seven assaults, two of which were serious assaults, four disturbances, one incident of failing to leave a licensed premises, one noise complaint, and 41 thefts. He reported that no hate crimes had been recorded. He also reported that the National Policy Unit planned a visit to Queen Margaret University through Freshers' Week to discuss the dangers of overconsumption of alcohol.

Karen Harling, Licensing Standards Officer (LSO), raised concern over a breakdown in communication between Police Scotland and the Licensing Standards Officer, and pointed out that she had not received the information from the statistics Sergeant Miller had provided. Sergeant Miller undertook to discuss plans with the LSO that would address this issue.

3. LICENSING STANDARDS OFFICER REPORT

Ms Harling spoke to her report and explained the outcomes from the May and June 2025 Licensing Board meetings in detail. She also advised that seven premises had confirmed their provisional premises licences to operate on full premises licences, which represented a real step forward. She advised that several other premises would be brought before the Board for their continued use of occasional licences.

Ms Harling explained that she was marketing the Forum as well as she could, but noted that her visits to premises usually concerned compliance. She also advised of joint working with community police officers, specifically in relation to issues of the supply of alcohol to vulnerable persons.

Ms Harling also advised that training from Alcohol Focus could be provided to the Forum, but unfortunately this had not been able to proceed previously due to a lack of response from Police Scotland. She gave an account of the content of the training, which was about understanding the role of the Forum, and intended for this to be organised again in the near future.

Responding to a question from Councillor Dugdale, and a further question from John Thayers, Ms Harling gave an account of her work following receipt of a report of alcohol being supplied to a vulnerable person on credit. She provided strict guidance to the premises on never serving anyone who presented as being intoxicated, and never giving alcohol on credit. She explained that the information had come from other agencies, and that her role was to attempt to cut off the source by dealing with the premises. She reported that, based on the responses received, she considered that there was a wider issue of giving alcohol on credit; she advised that community police officers would also discuss the issue in other towns. Mr Thayers said he would pass this information onto the Vulnerable Adults Group, and added that it would be helpful to feed any specific areas of concern to the group and to Police Scotland.

The Chair and Councillor McGuire thanked Ms Harling for her extensive report and for the work she had undertaken.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Responding to a question from Councillor Dugdale, Forum members discussed rules around consuming alcohol on buses, and Sergeant Miller undertook to feedback on the matter following a meeting with Lothian Buses.

Mr Thayers advised that development of alcohol standards was still awaited from the Scottish Government. He would contact Alcohol Focus for an update, and would share any information with the group.

Kat Burke advised that NHS Lothian had made representation to the Licensing Board in response to various licence applications, which was a new approach implemented over the last year. NHS Lothian would now review this approach and its impact, and would update the Forum in due course. Ms Burke reported that work was underway on commercial determinants in relation to public health. She also agreed that having a dedicated NHS Lothian update on Forum agendas would be of use going forward.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

Future meeting invites will be sent out electronically.

- Wednesday 19 November 2025, 10am (Joint meeting with the Licensing Board)
- Wednesday 18 February 2026, 10am
- Training session with Alcohol Focus, date TBC
- Wednesday 20 May 2026, 10am

