Licensing Sub-Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on Thursday 30 July 2026 at 10.00 am at Online/Virtual

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PRESENT:	Councillor Jane Salmon (Chair) Councillor Ruth Bannister Councillor Selena Gray
OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:	Councillor Andy Higson (observing) Councillor Bill Williams (observing)
OFFICER SUPPORT:	Charlotte Precious, legal officer Andrew Heron, licensing officer Wesley McArthur, licensing officer Esther Jones, licensing as a responsible authority officer Andrew Weir, constitutional officer

1. APOLOGIES

This was a virtual licensing sub-committee meeting.

The chair explained to the participants and observers how the virtual meeting would run. Everyone then introduced themselves.

There were no apologies for absence.

The legal representative for the applicant in relation to item 6 on the agenda requested a variation of the order of business. However, other person 2, in relation to item 5 on the agenda advised that they had made special arrangements to attend the meeting. The Chair advised that the request to vary the order of business was not granted.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The voting members were confirmed verbally, one at a time.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

5. LICENSING ACT 2003: LULU'S, 1B CALTON AVENUE, LONDON SE21 7DE

The licensing officer presented their report. Members had no questions for the licensing officer.

The applicant and their legal representative addressed the sub-committee. Members had questions for the applicant and their legal representative.

An other person, objecting to the application, addressed the sub-committee Members had no questions for the other person.

The licensing sub-committee also noted the written representations of two other persons, who were not in attendance.

Both parties were given up to five minutes for summing up.

The meeting adjourned at 10.35am for the sub-committee to consider its decision.

The meeting reconvened at 10.56am and the chair advised

everyone present of the sub-committee's decision.

RESOLVED:

That the application made by Lulu's London Ltd for a premises licence to be granted under Section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003 in respect of the premises known as Lulu's, 1b Calton Avenue, London, SE21 7DE is granted as follows:

1. Supply of alcohol to be consumed on and off the premises:

    - Monday to Saturday: 08:00 to 22:30
    - Sunday: 08:00 to 16:30

2. Recorded music (indoors)

    - Monday to Saturday: 08:00 to 22:30
    - Sunday: 08:00 to 16:30

3. Opening hours:

- Monday to Saturday: 08:00 to 23:00
- Sunday: 08:00 to 17:00.

Conditions

The operation of the premises under the licence shall be subject to the relevant mandatory conditions, any conditions derived from the operation schedule highlighted in Section M of the application form, conditions agreed with the Metropolitan Police Service, the environmental protection team and trading standards and the following conditions:

1. A dedicated contact telephone number for the premises shall be prominently displayed where it can easily be seen and read by passers-by.

Reasons

On 3 June 2026 Lulu's London Limited applied for a premises licence to be granted under Section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003 in respect of the premises known as Lulu's, 1b Calton Avenue, London SE21 7DE.

The licensing officer informed the sub-committee that all three responsible authorities had withdrawn their representation after conciliating further conditions with the premises.

The applicant described the premises as a coffee shop and deli during the day, changing to a wine bar in the evening. The deli would close at approximately 16:00 hours, they would then reopen for the evening offering at 18:00 hours. There would be no off-sales whilst they were closed and the wine bar was currently open Wednesday through to Saturday. They explained that they had submitted robust conditions with their application but these had not been forwarded to the responsible authorities, which lead to them making representations.

The premises had another venue within the area that they submitted worked very well with conditions and systems in place, they had received no challenges or complaints in relation to this premises.

Three other persons made representations against the granting of the licence, one of which was in attendance at the hearing. They raised three areas of concern: the first related to the status of the previous premises licence for Heritage Cheese; the second why off sales were required from 08:00 hours, given the prevalence of school children in the area; the third query related to how the external area would be managed past 22:00 hours to prevent public nuisance.

In respect of the first question, the premises explained that they were not connected to Heritage Cheese and the premises couldn't use their licence as a back-up licence, nor did they have any intention to. The licensing officer clarified that the premises wasn't in a cumulative impact area and so the number of licensed premises wasn't a relevant factor, they also clarified the process licensing would undertake prior to striking off a licence.

In respect of the second query, the applicant explained they had customers entering and purchasing a coffee in the morning, but they might also buy a bottle of wine as a gift. Off sales from 08:00 hours would enable customers to do that, they wouldn't open the wine then and there at that time of day. This would potentially happen later in the day during the summer if a customer would like a glass of wine with their sandwich but not before 13:00.

The alcohol sold by the premises was bottled wine past a certain price point, which would not attract those under the age limit. The premises also made the point that, just because schools were nearby and the premises offered off sales, this did not mean someone underage was going to attempt to purchase alcohol from them. They had all the conditions in place that responsible authorities were happy with to ensure that such sales wouldn't happen.

Addressing the third area of concern, the premises explained that they had never had any issues with public nuisance, they clear the area quietly and in a manner that is respectful of the residents. They also have conditions ensuring the external seating area would be rendered unusable after 22:00.

The sub-committee carefully considered all representations made by the other persons. They agreed that the Heritage Cheese licence was not relevant to this application and noted that the responsible authorities had withdrawn their representations after conditions had been agreed between the parties.

The sub-committee were satisfied that the robust conditions agreed with the responsible authorities addressed the concerns raised by the other persons. A condition ensuring a dedicated telephone number for the premises was prominently displayed would ensure that residents could contact the premises in the event of any issues arising.

In reaching its decision, the licensing sub-committee had regard to all the relevant considerations including the Licensing Act 2003, the Section 182 Guidance and National Licensing Policy Framework (November 2025), its equality duties and the four licensing objectives and considered that this decision was appropriate and proportionate.

Appeal rights

The applicant may appeal against any decision:

a) To impose conditions on the licence
b) To exclude a licensable activity or refuse to specify a person as premises supervisor.

Any person who made relevant representations in relation to the application who desires to contend:

a) That the licence ought not to have been granted; or
b) That, on granting the licence, the licensing authority ought not to have imposed different or additional conditions to the licence, or ought to have modified them in a different way

may appeal against the decision.

Any appeal must be made to the Magistrates' Court for the area in which the premises are situated. Any appeal must be commenced by notice of appeal given by the appellant to the justices' clerk for the Magistrates' Court within the period of 21 days beginning with the day on which the appellant was notified by the licensing authority of the decision appealed against.

6. LICENSING ACT 2003: THE EMPIRE LOUNGE, UNITS 1 AND 2, 777 OLD KENT ROAD, LONDON SE15 1NZ

The licensing officer presented their report. Members had no questions for the licensing officer.

The applicant and their legal representative addressed the sub-committee. Members had questions for the applicant and their legal representative.

The officer representing licensing as a responsible authority addressed the sub-committee. Members had questions for the officer.

The licensing sub-committee heard form an other person objecting to the application. Members had questions for the other person.

The licensing sub-committee noted the written representations from two other persons, who were not in attendance.

All parties were given up to five minutes for summing up.

The meeting adjourned at 12.07pm for the sub-committee to consider its decision.

The meeting reconvened at 12.46pm and the chair advised everyone present of the sub-committee's decision.

RESOLVED:

That the application made by Speedlink Services Ltd for a premises licence to be granted under Section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003 in respect of the premises known as The Empire Lounge, Units 1 and 2, 777 Old Kent Road, London, SE15 1NZ is granted as follows:

1. Supply of alcohol to be consumed on and off the premises:

    - Monday to Tuesday: 11:00 to 00:00
    - Wednesday: 11:00 to 01:00
    - Thursday: 11:00 to 01:30
    - Friday to Saturday: 11:00 to 03:30
    - Sunday: 11:00 to 01:00

2. Recorded music (indoors)

    - Monday to Tuesday: 11:00 to 00:00
    - Wednesday: 11:00 to 01:00
    - Thursday: 11:00 to 01:30
    - Friday to Saturday: 11:00 to 03:30
    - Sunday: 11:00 to 01:00

3. Late night refreshment (indoors)

    - Monday to Tuesday: 11:00 to 00:00
    - Wednesday: 11:00 to 01:00
    - Thursday: 11:00 to 01:30
    - Friday to Saturday: 11:00 to 03:30
    - Sunday: 11:00 to 01:00

4. Opening hours:

    - Monday to Tuesday: 11:00 to 00:30
    - Wednesday: 11:00 to 01:30
    - Thursday: 11:00 to 02:00
    - Friday to Saturday: 11:00 to 04:00
    - Sunday: 11:00 to 01:30

5. Seasonal variations and non-standard timings:

   On the following days, the permitted opening hours, and hours permitted for licensable activities may be extended for an additional hour:

   - Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday of the Easter weekend.
   - Friday, Saturday and Sunday of both May Bank Holidays and the August Bank Holiday, Christmas Eve and Boxing Day.
   - On the trading day on which the clocks go forward (i.e. the start of British Summer Time).
   - From the end of permitted hours on New Year's Eve to the start of permitted hours on the following day.

Conditions

The operation of the premises under the licence shall be subject to the relevant mandatory conditions, any conditions derived from the operation schedule highlighted in Section M of the application form and the conditions agreed with the Metropolitan Police Service.

Recommendations:

1. That the premises invite residents to quarterly meetings to discuss any issues that arise, particularly residents in Sylvan Grove.

Reasons

On 6 May 2026, Speedlink Services Ltd applied for a premises licence to be granted under Section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003 in respect of the premises known as The Empire Lounge, Units 1 and 2, 777 Old Kent Road, London SE15 1NZ.

The licensing officer informed the sub-committee that the Metropolitan Police Service had withdrawn its representation after the applicant reduced the hours sought and agreed to additional licence conditions. Photographs had also been circulated by an other person who was present at the hearing.

The applicant’s representative explained that the premises had been operating for over 10 years. During this time they had made a number of applications to extend their licence, these were granted and any concerns that were raised historically never materialised.

The applicant’s representative stated that the premises was culturally important to the Nigerian community, operating as a cultural hub and a place where members of that community could enjoy Nigerian food. He said that noise did not escape from the premises and that, during a previous visit, he had been unable to hear anything from outside. That visit took place before the neighbouring buildings occupied by the other persons had been built. The premises had a noise limiter,

which the representative stated had been set by noise officers. The applicant also produced a letter of support from a nearby resident. All parties agreed that the letter could be introduced in accordance with regulation 18 of the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005, and it was read out at the hearing.

The representative stated that dispersal from the premises was gradual and that, on a typical Friday or Saturday night, there were approximately 20 customers. They emphasised that no complaints had been made to the environmental protection team, which had not objected to the application. Although the Metropolitan Police Service had raised concerns, these had been addressed and its representation had been withdrawn.

In relation to the recently circulated photographs, the applicant suggested that they were historic and dated from 2023. They stated that an SIA-registered security officer was stationed at the corner of Sylvan Grove and that anyone parking there would not be permitted entry to the premises. They also suggested that pavement parking was caused by people attending the nearby church or by residents of the terrace. The applicant said there was a clear line of sight from the premises, enabling staff to see anyone who parked there and then attempted to enter, in which case entry would be refused.

Licensing officers had visited the premises on a number of occasions and found it to be compliant. The applicant stated that, although the hours sought were outside those recommended in the Statement of Licensing Policy 2026–2031 (SOLP), the premises did not cause problems.

Licensing, as a responsible authority, advised that repeated applications had resulted in several licences being in effect at the same time, creating uncertainty about which licence governed the operation of the premises. It sought clarification on whether any existing licences would be surrendered if the current application was granted. Licensing also noted that the hours sought were outside those recommended in the SOLP.

The applicant clarified their intention in respect of the multiple licences: should the application be granted, they would surrender two of the previous licences and keep the third as a shadow licence.

Three other persons made representations against the grant of the licence, one of whom was in attendance at the hearing. They lived locally and raised three main concerns about the premises. First, they said that, when music was played at night, it could be heard from their property halfway down the road and disturbed their sleep. They described the music as Afrobeats with a heavy bass and said they sometimes had to wear earplugs because of the noise. They also said the disturbance was not limited to music, but included people leaving the premises, walking down the road, talking and taking photographs.

The second issue concerned crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. The other persons said that, when events were held at The Empire Lounge, they had been heckled by men while returning home and had taken to messaging their partner with their expected arrival time in order to feel safer. They also said that men urinated in the greenery, which they found very uncomfortable because of the exposure involved.

In relation to the public safety objective, the other persons said that Sylvan Grove was very narrow, as shown in the circulated photographs. When events took place at the premises, cars were parked along the road, on the pavement, in residents' parking spaces and wherever space could be found. They said the photographs showed that some vehicles had received parking fines, but that drivers appeared more concerned with finding a convenient space to attend the lounge. They said this obstructed the road and pavements and prevented residents from parking.

They accepted that not all of the cars belonged to customers of the lounge, but said that most appeared when events were taking place, which they had witnessed themselves. They said the area was already overcrowded and that, during events, attendees parked wherever they could. They had also gathered a petition from residents opposing the grant of the licence. It was submitted on the deadline day but was not accepted by the licensing team, and they were unclear why it had been rejected.

The applicant's representative objected to the petition being introduced under Regulation 18 of the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005. He had not seen the petition, had been unable to test its validity and did not know why it had been rejected. He submitted that, if it was out of time, it should not be considered. To ensure fairness, he also withdrew from evidence the letter of support that he had previously read out.

In closing, the applicant's representative submitted that, if the sub-committee accepted the submissions of the licensing authority and the other persons, it would be rejecting his evidence and preferring opinion over the evidence he had presented.

The sub-committee rejected that submission. It could not be satisfied that no noise was emanating from the premises. The representative's account of hearing no noise outside the premises related to a visit approximately 10 years earlier, before many of the neighbouring buildings had been built. The sub-committee noted that sound does not travel only in a linear direction and that buildings can amplify, rather than dampen, sound. It also noted that no noise assessment had been carried out since the original calibration.

However, the sub-committee also noted that there had been no recent noise complaints and that the environmental protection team had not submitted a representation. It further noted that licensing officers visited the premises on the evening of Friday 27 February 2026 and recorded that no noise was witnessed emanating from the premises. The sub-committee therefore could not conclude

that the premises was solely responsible for the nuisance raised by the other persons.

The objections engaged the crime and disorder, public nuisance and public safety licensing objectives. However, the responsible authorities with expertise in those areas had either not objected or had withdrawn their representations after being satisfied with the proposed conditions.

The sub-committee considered that the conditions offered by the applicant, together with those agreed with the police, would address most of the issues raised. In particular, it noted the condition requiring an SIA-accredited security officer to be positioned at the corner of Old Kent Road and Sylvan Grove whenever the premises operated beyond 00:30. This was intended to prevent patrons who parked on Sylvan Grove from entering the premises and to assist with effective dispersal. The sub-committee also recommended that the premises invite nearby residents, particularly those on Sylvan Grove, to quarterly meetings to discuss and resolve any issues that arose. The licence was granted on that basis.

In reaching its decision, the licensing sub-committee had regard to all the relevant considerations including the Licensing Act 2003, the s.182 Guidance and National Licensing Policy Framework (November 2025), its equality duties and the four licensing objectives and considered that this decision was appropriate and proportionate.

Appeal rights

The applicant may appeal against any decision:

a) To impose conditions on the licence
b) To exclude a licensable activity or refuse to specify a person as premises supervisor.

Any person who made relevant representations in relation to the application who desires to contend:

a) That the licence ought not to have been granted; or
b) That, on granting the licence, the licensing authority ought not to have imposed different or additional conditions to the licence, or ought to have modified them in a different way

may appeal against the decision.

Any appeal must be made to the Magistrates' Court for the area in which the premises are situated. Any appeal must be commenced by notice of appeal given by the appellant to the justices' clerk for the Magistrates' Court within the period of 21 days beginning with the day on which the appellant was notified by the licensing authority of the decision appealed against.

The meeting ended at 12.51am.

CHAIR:

DATED: