# LOCAL LICENSING FORUM

ABERDEEN, 2 September 2025. Minute of Meeting of the LOCAL LICENSING FORUM. Present:- Elaine Mottram, William Rae, Cran, Danuta Dobrzanska, Steve, Philip, Stewart, Pete Turner, Mackie and John Webster.

## WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

**1.** The Chairperson welcomed all those in attendance to the Local Licensing Forum meeting.

The Clerk informed the Forum that apologies for absence had been submitted by Scott Forrest.

**The Forum resolved:-**
to note the apologies.

## SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT DAY OF 17 JUNE 2025 (FOR APPROVAL)

**2.** The Forum reviewed the summary of the Development Day held on 17 June 2025.

**The Forum resolved:-**
to approve the summary.

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

**3.** The Chairperson provided the Forum with an update on membership status, highlighting the following:-
- Diane Sande, Licensing Standards Officer had retired with no replacement being offered;
- John Webster replaced Neil Grant as the Licensing Sergeant from the Police; and
- Lindsay Webster was named as a new representative for Aberdeen in Recovery, which was a small charity who support people with their recovery from alcohol and/or drug addiction.

**The Forum resolved:-**
(i)     to note the membership update;
(ii)    to note that the Forum approved all new members to join the Local Licensing Forum with immediate effect; and
(iii)   to acknowledge that the Chairperson would continue to liaise with her contacts regarding the on-going appointment of replacement representatives.

## BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE CURRENT MEMBERSHIP, INCLUDING THE ADULT SOCIAL WORK TEAM

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**4.** The Chairperson encouraged the Forum to consider building and maintaining relationships with individuals and organisations outside of the current membership. These connections could provide valuable advice, insights, and opportunities for short presentations, creating a broader network to support the Forum's initiatives.

John Webster advised that establishing these relationships could be beneficial, particularly in addressing issues that extend beyond alcohol, such as mental health and drug use, which often intersect with alcohol-related problems. He suggested that exploring this broader scope could be worthwhile.

Phil Mackie added that maintaining an open and flexible approach was essential. He emphasised the importance of finding common ground with various organisations, as many relevant issues may not fall under regulatory frameworks. He highlighted the need for ongoing dialogue with a diverse range of stakeholders to address and reduce harm effectively. He also mentioned a productive meeting he had with staff from adult social work and expressed his intention to keep in touch with them to explore future collaboration.

**The Forum resolved:-**
to establish and maintain relationships with individuals and organisations outside of the current membership.

**ABERDEEN DATA RELATING TO ALCOHOL (DANUTA AND PETE)**

**5.** Pete Turner and Danuta Dobrzanska presented data on alcohol-related issues in Aberdeen, emphasising the need for established success criteria, which were semi-formalised in August. They collaborated with Rayner Stewart, the Council's Analytics and Insight Manager, to explore various data sources, including the Population Needs Assessment and the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). Despite gathering valuable insights, they noted a lack of comprehensive data on revenues and policing costs, complicating their analysis for the Licensing Board.

Mr Turner shared his experiences with AI tools, particularly Microsoft Copilot, which he found effective for generating insights from data. He highlighted the AI's ability to provide balanced recommendations based on different prompts, such as prioritising health impacts versus business outcomes. However, he acknowledged that AI lacks the complexity required for nuanced discussions, highlighting the importance of human input in data interpretation and decision-making.

Ms Dobrzanska pointed out the imbalance in available public domain information, noting that there was more data from health and social care sectors than from businesses. She stressed the need for businesses to publish relevant information to ensure their perspectives were included in discussions. Additionally, she addressed the challenges of accessing fragmented footfall data across multiple PDFs, but noted that AI could efficiently analyse and synthesise this information.

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The conversation highlighted the importance of human dialogue in understanding the complexities of alcohol and licensing issues. Whilst AI could serve as a starting point for discussions, it could not replace the need for collaborative efforts to establish realistic goals and identify stakeholders. Ms Dobrzanska emphasised that LOIP targets were set through public consultation, ensuring community support.

Overall, the Forum recognised AI's potential to assist in data analysis and decision-making whilst acknowledging the necessity of human engagement to navigate the complexities of alcohol-related issues in Aberdeen.

Currently, there appears to be a significant imbalance, with far more public domain information available from the NHS and social care sectors compared to the business side. If this imbalance continues, discussions and AI-generated proposals were likely to favour health data. Mr Turner noted that if businesses wanted their perspectives to be considered, they needed to ensure that relevant information was published and accessible to these tools. If businesses keep their data private, the benefits they experience may not be adequately represented in discussions.

Ms Dobrzanska shared her approach to using AI, categorising it into two areas: tasks that were simple but time-consuming, such as summarizing lengthy documents, and data processing. AI could efficiently handle large amounts of data, percentages, and documents, and because it has internet access, users could input links to external data sources. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding without needing all the data physically on hand. Users could simply provide a link, and the AI could analyse the information and provide insights based on that data.

Steve McConnachie contributed to the conversation, expressing that it was a fascinating discussion. He prefaced his remarks by stating his support for the incorporation of technology into the dialogue, viewing it as a valuable assistant to the work being done. He echoed sentiments from John Webster and Phil Mackie, emphasising that technology should serve as a support tool rather than a primary decision-making authority. He expressed concern about the potential for individuals to relinquish their autonomy and freedom of thought by relying too heavily on AI-generated responses. Whilst AI could provide vast amounts of information, he highlighted the critical distinction between information and knowledge, as well as between knowledge and wisdom, which involved the application of that knowledge. He reiterated his overall support for the use of these technologies whilst advocating for a balanced approach that maintained human judgment and critical thinking in decision-making processes.

**The Forum resolved:-**
to note the findings in relation to AI generated data.

**LICENSING BOARD AND LOCAL LICENSING FORUM JOINT MEETING - AGENDA ITEMS**

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**6.**     The Chairperson outlined the agenda items for the upcoming Joint Licensing Board and Local Licensing Forum meeting, stressing the importance of the Licensing Board understanding the Forum's composition, including the roles and perspectives of its members. Consequently, a membership update and introductions, especially from the new members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, were included as an agenda item.

The Forum also revisited the topic of Aberdeen data related to alcohol harms, which was recommended for inclusion in the agenda. The significance of utilising AI for data analysis was emphasised, with the understanding that the effectiveness of AI relied on the quality of the data sources used.

Additionally, the Forum agreed on several other agenda items, including an update on the ELEPHANT Study, insights from Licensing Board members regarding the Forum's role and their expectations, and the establishment of networking links with Adult Social Work.

**The Forum resolved:-**
to note the Joint Licensing Board and Local Licensing Forum agenda items.


**MEETING DATES AND PLANS FOR 2026**

**7.**     The Chairperson informed the Forum that the Clerk would provide the 2026 meeting dates in due course.

**The Forum resolved:-**
to note that the Clerk would send out the 2026 meeting appointments in due course.


**AOCB**

**8.**     The Chairperson informed the Forum that she did not wish to be nominated for the position of Chairperson at the Local Licensing Forum Annual General Meeting (AGM) in early 2026, but would continue to offer her support. She encouraged the Forum to consider potential nominees and to communicate with those individuals before the AGM.

Additionally, the Chairperson announced her plans to organise a social event for all members, including the Licensing Board, following the next meeting in November 2025.

**The Forum resolved:-**
(i)     to note that the current Chairperson did not wish to be nominated at the Annual General Meeting;
(ii)     for members to liaise with potential nominees to ensure their willingness to be nominated prior to the Annual General Meeting; and

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(iii)     to note that further details regarding the social event would be circulated before the next meeting.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 4 NOVEMBER 2025**

**9.**     The Forum was informed that the next meeting would be the Joint Licensing Board and Local Licensing Forum, scheduled for 23 September 2025, followed by the next Local Licensing Forum meeting on 4 November 2025.

**The Forum resolved:-**
to note the dates of the upcoming meetings.

**-     ELAINE MOTTRAM, Chairperson**