

Minutes of:	LICENSING HEARING SUB COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	17 th August 2026
Present:	Councillor B Ibrahim (in the Chair) Councillors D Hill and K Simpson
Also in attendance:	M. Bridge (Bury Council- Licensing Unit) M. Cunliffe Bury Council- (Democratic Services) PC P. Ecclestone (Greater Manchester Police- Representor) M. Fort (Bury Council- Trading Standards) K. Halligan (Bury Council- Trading Standards Representor) S. Lyth – (Bury Council- Legal Advisor) J. Naylor (Bury Council- Trading Standards) L. Scully (Bury Council- Legal Advisor) Councillor J. Rydeheard (Observing) G. Dixon (Applicant's Representative) A. Zamfir (Applicant) J. Chittick (Bury Times) H. Richardson (Manchester Evening News)
Public Attendance:	The Hearing was held virtually and interested members of the public were provided with a link to access the hearing online via Microsoft Teams or could be telephoned into the meeting via audio only. No other members of the public were in virtual attendance.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted by B. Thomson (Assistant Director of Public Protection & Resilience) and A. Bucior (Public Protection).

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING(S)

The Minutes of the last Licensing Hearing Sub Committee meetings held at 10.00am on the 2nd July 2026 and 10.00am on the 6th July 2026 were attached to the agenda.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the Licensing Hearing Sub Committee held on the 2nd July 2026 and the 6th July 2026 be approved as a correct record.

4 APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENCE TO BE GRANTED UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003 IN RESPECT OF AVA, 46 BOLTON STREET, BURY, BL9 0LL

The Licensing Authority received an application for a Premises Licence to be granted under the Licensing Act 2003 in respect of AVA, 46 Bolton Street, Bury, BL9 0LL.

In making a decision, the steps the Sub-Committee can take are:-

- To grant the application in the terms requested
- To grant the application subject to conditions
- To amend or modify existing or proposed conditions
- To refuse the application

The Licensing Act 2003 and the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations are the relevant legislation.

The Panel would make a decision on the day of the hearing and the parties would be notified subsequently of the decision and the reasons for it by letter from the Licensing Office.

The Licensing Unit Manager presented the report and explained the applicant for the licence is Mr Alin-Mihai Zamfir, 13 Woodfield Street, Bolton, BL3 2HD. He is also the proposed Designated Premises Supervisor should the premises licence be granted.

The Applicant had complied with all the necessary procedural requirements laid down by the Act.

As part of the statutory process the Responsible Authorities and interested parties are entitled to make representations in relation to the grant of a licence. Where representations are made and not withdrawn Members are required to determine them.

Representations must be relevant to the licensing objectives defined within the Act. The objectives are:-

- the prevention of crime and disorder
- public safety
- prevention of public nuisance and
- protection of children from harm

The application was for the grant of a Premises Licence under Part 3 of the Licensing Act 2003.

Opening Times:
Monday to Sunday 07.00 to 23.00

Retail Sale of Alcohol (Off the premises):
Monday to Sunday 07.00 to 23.00

The conditions contained in the operating schedule submitted by the applicant were also attached at Appendix 1 in the agenda packs.

Following discussions with Public Health, the applicant has agreed to amending the retail Sale of Alcohol hours to 08.00 to 23.00 Monday to Sunday. Upon questioning by the Licensing Unit Manager, this would also be the same for the opening times.

Trading Standards in their capacity as a responsible authority would give their reasons for making a representation. The representation was attached at appendix 2 in the agenda packs.

Greater Manchester Police in their capacity as a responsible authority would give their reasons for making a representation. The representation was attached at appendix 3 in the agenda packs.

After hearing the representations made and the evidence presented, Members were obliged to determine the application with a view to promoting the licensing objectives and having regard to the Authority's Licensing Policy and National Guidance.

The Secretary of State's Guidance to the Licensing Act 2003 is provided to licensing authorities in relation to the carrying out of their functions under the 2003 Act. It also provides information to magistrates' courts hearing appeals against licensing decisions and has been made widely available for the benefit of those who run licensed premises, their legal advisers and the general public. It is a key medium for promoting best practice, ensuring consistent application of licensing powers across England and Wales and for promoting fairness, equal treatment and proportionality.

Section 4 of the 2003 Act provides that, in carrying out its functions, a licensing authority must 'have regard to' guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 182. The Guidance is therefore binding on all licensing authorities to that extent. However, the Guidance cannot anticipate every possible scenario or set of circumstances that may arise and, as long as licensing authorities have properly understood this Guidance, they may depart from it if they have good reason to do so and can provide full reasons.

Departure from the Guidance could give rise to an appeal or judicial review, and the reasons given will then be a key consideration for the courts when considering the lawfulness and merits of any decision taken.

The Sub-Committee must consider what steps are appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives.

Mr Geoff Dixon was representing the Mr Zamfir (The applicant) and introduced himself to the meeting as a licensing consultant having worked for over 35 years in the licensing trade. For the past few years he had operated a licensing training company across the UK.

He provided the committee with some background timescales providing dates and that Mr Zamfir had been introduced to the previous licence holder with talks conducted to take on the business. This had come about from a friend of Mr Zamfir who worked at the store and Mr Zamfir had purchased the company and then changed the name.

The Licensing Unit Manager stated that extra information had been circulated to the committee which had been supplied by Mr Dixon. These documents detailed persons with significant control being ceased and a letter from the applicant's accountant confirming Mr Zamir owns 100% of the company.

Mr Dixon added Mr Zamfir was in clear control of the business as an independent operator and accountable sole trader. He had never worked with Mr Faraydn Qasmpwr the previous owner and Mr Zamfir had only been in the store on previous occasions to discuss the business and was not working for him.

A Member enquired why was not company name changed and had Mr Zamfir not worked with the previous owner. Mr Dixon reported that the name change arose due to advice given as Mr Zamfir was not experienced in these matters and he confirmed that Mr Zamfir had not been employed by the previous owner.

A Member asked had Mr Zamfir worked at the store any time previously and Mr Dixon confirmed not before taking on the current lease.

A Member questioned why Mr Zamfir resigned and Mr Mohamedi took over control of the business at the end of April as per Companies House records. Mr Zamfir stated this was due

to an issue with the accounts and Mr Dixon added that Mr Mohamedi ceased any involvement at the start of June.

A Member asked about Mr Zamfir being present in the store in February and Mr Dixon replied that neither GMP and Trading Standards spoke to him or asked his name and he had never worked there before.

The Chair wondered what experience Mr Zamfir had with a premises licence and Mr Dixon stated he had not held one before and this was his first business operated since April. He had passed his personal licence exam in May.

The Chair enquired what qualifications did Mr Zamfir have and Mr Dixon confirmed the personal licence award was a level 2 certificate and Bolton Council had granted his personal licence.

Kelly Halligan from Trading Standards queried that Mr Zamfir was working in the store as he had been seen a number of times in the premises including behind the counter. She asked how long he had known Mr Qasmpwr the previous owner and his involvement with him. Mr Zamfir was not clear on exact dates but replied he had known him from around January this year and he had been introduced to him by a person who worked at the store.

Ms Halligan asked what involvement Mr Qasmpwr had in the business and Mr Dixon reported none.

Ms Halligan enquired why Mr Qasmpwr was stacking shelves in the store on the 1st August. Mr Dixon queried any evidence to prove this and it was just hearsay. The Council's legal advisor stated the account came from a Council Officer who witnessed it herself so it was not hearsay.

PC Peter Ecclestone from Greater Manchester Police asked Mr Zamfir who had introduced him to Mr Qasmpwr. Mr Zamfir commented that it was friend from Bolton named Andre Meeter. PC Ecclestone stated that Mr Zamfir had been seen behind the counter serving customers when the closure notice was issued. Mr Zamfir explained he was helping Mr Qasmpwr move stock out after the notice had been served.

Ms Halligan presented the Trading Standards representation:-

Ava Market, 46 Bolton Street, Bury has been a mini market for a number of years. The business was previously called express mini market, and the applicant Alin Zamfir worked in the shop. The business rates for the premises is in the name of Express Mini Market Ltd and have been since the 19th December 2022. Express Mini Market Ltd, company number 14549110, is the previous company name for Ava Market Ltd, the name was changed on the 12th February 2026. The limited company has no current directors; the 2 resigned directors are the applicant Alin Zamfir and Faraydn Qasmpwr. The applicant Alin Zamfir was a director for 20 days, between the 9th and 20th April 2026. Mr Qasmpwr was a director between the 19th December 2022 and the 8th April 2026. I produce a copy of the company search as appendix 1.

Express Mini Market has previously held a Premises Licence from 23 November 2022. Faraydn Qasmpwr has been the Premises Licence Holder since that date and has been the Designated Premises Supervisor since 4 January 2023. The licence was revoked by the licensing panel on the 4th November 2025; I produce the minutes from the panel as appendix 2 to this representation. The Licensing Hearing subcommittee were satisfied that the licensing objects had not been met and failed on the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, prevention of public nuisance and on the protection of children from harm.

On the 18th December, a follow up visit was carried out to Express Mini Market, illicit tobacco and counterfeit headphones were seized by me, PC Eccleston seized 16 cans of alcohol as the premises had no alcohol licence, on the premises was Faraydn Qasmpwr.

On the 27th January 2026, I hand delivered a letter to the director Mr Qasmpwr, to advise him that this authority was seeking a closure order against the premises. Whilst in the shop I had to advise them to remove the counterfeit labubu dolls and headphones.

On the 3rd February 2026, I issued a further letter indicating the intention to close the premises and served it in the shop by handing it to Alin Zamfir.

On the 9th February 2026, with PC Eccleston I closed the shop, present in the shop was Alin Zamfir and Faraydn Qasmpwr. We served a closure Notice, (Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014), the shop was closed and we affixed closure orders to relevant entry points. Notices were served on Mr Qasmpwr on the premises.

On the 10th February 2026, I attended Manchester and Salford Magistrates Court with PC Eccleston, where the court granted the closure order, and the premises was closed for 2 months.

The shop re-opened on 10th April 2026, and the landlord said the business was now owned by Alin Zamfir a copy for the lease that the landlord sent is attached, as appendix 3. The landlord claimed Faraydn Qasmpwr, had contacted him claiming to have sold the shop to Alin Zamfir, and therefore asking him to change the lease to his name.

On the 29th April 2026, companies house shows that Alin Zamfir resigned as director after 20 days, and that Hazhar Mohamedi took over as a person with significant control of Ava Market. Further checks on companies' house give a correspondence address for Mr Mohamedi as 1 Cherry Gardens, Rhodes Street, Hull, HU35RQ. Hazhar Mohamedi, is the director of City Road Vape CF24 Ltd, company number 16327763, which has a registered office address of 169 City Road, Cardiff, CF243JB. Intelligence checks show that the shop at 169 City Road, Cardiff, CF243JB, has been subject to enforcement activity by regulatory services. Three test purchase of illicit cigarettes or hand rolling tobacco have been made, all 3 items purchase for £5 an item, well below the retail value of genuine cigarettes and tobacco. In December 2025, an intel report was received saying the shop was selling counterfeit cigarettes. Same allegation was received in December 2025, and a similar allegation in May 2026, but this time the allegation said the shop had smuggled vapes and drugs as well. In June 2026 the shop had seized 21 packets of cigarettes, 1 pouch of hand rolling and wraps of cannabis.

Given that the limited company has no directors, and the person with significant control has a premises in another area, of which he is the director, which has been subject to enforcement action for illegal activity, and the history associated with these premises for which the applicant has been present on numerous occasions, cause Trading Standards to have significant concerns over the granting of a premises license and believe that it wouldn't be long before the licensing objectives are undermined once again.

Ms Halligan added there was no timescales listed on the accountancy letter provided and the screenshot document listing people in significant control and ceased did not match the backdated date of the 1st April.

The Chair asked was it normal practice to inspect premises after a licence had been revoked. Ms Halligan answered yes and they had received information that alcohol was still located on the premises.

The Chair enquired about the landlord of the store and Ms Halligan reported that a landlord and tenant are both served with a closure order letter. The Licensing Unit Manager added that the current lease was signed on the 8th April.

Ms Halligan reported that in the absence of Mr Qasmpwr, the closure order letter was given to Mr Zamfir to pass on. Mr Dixon repeated that Mr Zamfir was not involved in the previous business and it was reasonable for him to be in the store to view the viability of the business.

The Chair felt it may have been clearer for Mr Zamfir to provide a written statement before the meeting in relation to a timeline and Mr Dixon had no idea why the accountant had structured the business dates the way it was presented.

PC P Ecclestone presented the representations from Greater Manchester Police:-

Ava Market was previously Express Mini Market where the applicant and proposed DPS; Alin-Mihai Zamfir worked. Since December 2022, the business rates for the premises was and still is, in the name of Express Mini Market Ltd however the company name was changed to Ava Market Ltd on the 12th February 2026. Following enquiries, on Companies House, it would appear that Ava Market Ltd is operating but with no registered directors listed. There have been two previous directors, one of which is the applicant, who was registered for a matter of 20 days between 9th April 2026 and 29 April 2026. The other resigned director was Faraydn Qasmpwr who was the previous license holder and designated premises supervisor. Mr Qasmpwr was the registered director between the 19th December 2022 and 8th April 2026.

Going back through the history of the premises, it opened as Express Mini Market in November 2022 and on the 23rd November 2022, a premises license was granted for Express Mini Market. Mr Qasmpwr was the license holder and became the designated premises supervisor (DPS) on 4th January 2023 where he remained in position up until the premises license was revoked by the Licensing Sub-Committee on the 4th November 2025 after they were satisfied that all four licensing objectives were undermined significantly. A copy of the minutes from the hearing are attached at appendix A.

Following the revocation and the appeal period had passed, a follow up visit was conducted on the 18th December 2025 where illicit tobacco and counterfeit headphones were seized by Kelly Halligan from Trading Standards and I seized 16 cans of alcohol which were still on the premises. At the time, Mr Qasmpwr was present in the store.

On the 9th February 2026, Kelly Halligan (Trading Standards) and I attended Express Mini Market and served a Closure Notice (Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) on Mr Qasmpwr. At the time of serving, Mr ZAMFIR was present at the premises. Prior to leaving, copies of the notice were fixed to all relevant entry / exit points.

The following day on the 10th February 2026, Kelly Halligan and I attended Manchester and Salford Magistrates Court where a Closure Order was granted for 2 months and the premises was subsequently closed until the 10th April 2026 during which time Mr QASMPWR had asked for the lease to be transferred over to Mr ZAMFIR following the sale of the business.

Since then, Greater Manchester Police received a piece of intelligence stating that there was a male working illegally (under the Immigration Act) at the premises.

As previously mentioned, Mr Zamfir resigned as director of Ava Market Ltd after 20 days on the 29th April 2026. According to Companies House, that same day a Mr Hazhar Mohamedi became a 'person with significant control' over Ava Market. Further checks show that Mr Mohamedi has a correspondent's address in Hull whilst being the director of City Road Vapes which is located in Cardiff. Information and intelligence have been shared by Trading

Standards with regards to the store in Cardiff and the seizures of illicit /counterfeit cigarettes, illegal vapes and a quantity of drugs.

Given that all directors have resigned from Ava Market Ltd, the fact that the individual who is listed as having significant control has three varying addresses, (if you include the one in Bury) and the information and intelligence with regards to the illegal activity at the business premises where this individual is listed as a director, Greater Manchester Police have significant concerns over the granting of a premises license and believe that should the license be granted, it wouldn't be long before the four licensing objectives are undermined once again.

PC Ecclestone repeated that Mr Zamfir was behind the counter serving customers when the closure order was provided. He then went and got Mr Qasmpwr from next door in the Barbers shop. Why was he behind the counter if he was observing the business and not working. There was also confusion with dates provided and going back in time and there was no confidence that Mr Zamfir was not associated with the Mr Qasmpwr.

A Member asked if any other staff were working in the shop when Mr Zamfir was behind the counter and it was reported no. Mr Dixon stated there were many reasons why he may have been behind the counter getting used to the business which was different to being employed or paid. Mr Zamfir added that Mr Qasmpwr was only gone for two minutes and was washing his hands next door.

Mr Zamfir repeated he was introduced by a friend to the business and as he had been interested in buying a shop for a while. Mr Qasmpwr had told him he did not sell illegal vapes or tobacco and told him later on about the alcohol licence being taken away.

Ms Halligan PC Ecclestone both summed up that they had concerns with links to the previous business.

Mr Dixon reported that Mr Zamfir could promote the four licensing objectives and was responsible to uphold these. The company had been purchased and he questioned if this had been closed and a new trader provided would the representations have been made. He had been provided with all the necessary documents to comply with the licensing objectives and his name being associated with the previous business could not be a breach. A balance of probability should be used and there was not enough to suggest the objectives would be broken. If the licence was granted then both Trading Standards and GMP could visit as this application had been made in good faith.

The Council's legal advisor added that any mention of a fit and proper person was not relevant to the application as this was based on the four licensing objectives.

The Sub-Committee then duly retired to consider the application.

The Members of the Panel were advised by the Legal Officer as to their duties under Section 4 of the Licensing Act 2003 to at all times consider the promotion of the Licensing Objectives, these being:

- a) the prevention of crime and disorder
- b) public safety
- c) the prevention of public nuisance
- d) the protection of children from harm

The Members were also advised of their duties in carrying out those functions in relation to the relevant provisions of the national guidance and the Council's licensing policy statement.

In addition, Members were advised to give appropriate weight to the steps that are appropriate to promote the licensing objectives together with relevant representations presented by all parties.

Delegated decision

All of the evidence was considered with care, and it was established that having understood the application and equally noting and understanding all the representations, the Sub-Committee found there were causes for concern so far as the promotion of the licensing objective were concerned in relation to:-

- Prevention of crime and disorder

There was a lack of confidence that the licensing objective could be upheld and fulfilled by the applicant. This would be undermined if granted and the information provided and presented had caused lots of concerns.

There were a number of inconsistencies provided by the applicant and lack of clarity on the directorship of the business. There was great uncertainty on the association with the previous owner of the company and the evidence from Trading Standards and GMP was deemed credible and consistent.

It was therefore agreed unanimously that the Sub- Committee **refuse the application**.

The Chair advised of their right to appeal the decision to the Court within the relevant timescales upon receiving written notification.

COUNCILLOR B IBRAHIM
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 11.00am and ended at 1.10pm)