



BUSINESS FRIENDLY LICENSING AND REGULATION FUND: EVALUATION REPORT

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Prepared for the Greater London Authority
by Six Till Six and MAKE Associates

MAYOR OF LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

In 2021 the GLA commissioned research to identify innovative work by local authorities to support hospitality and night time businesses through the pandemic and into recovery. The [report](#) showcased best practice from local authorities across London but also provided exemplars nationally and internationally.

Enthusiasm and engagement in the project were substantial, both from the night time and hospitality sector and local authorities themselves. As a result, in 2022 the GLA decided to fund a series of pilots that would take the idea of 'business friendly licensing' further. Five boroughs - Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Harrow and Islington - were chosen from a competitive process of high quality bids to progress their ideas to support, primarily, evening and night time businesses.

Commencing in October 2022, the projects reported on progress in March 2023. All five projects have delivered excellent outcomes already. They are still in progress and the local authorities are continuing to embed and expand on what has worked and what is promising.

The lessons learned to date can serve as excellent case studies for local authorities in London and beyond. They can adopt or adapt these to deliver business friendly licensing, to support recovery and build resilient night time places for the future.

The outcomes of these projects will be promoted through this report, together with events where the five boroughs will tell their stories. Following overwhelmingly positive feedback from the authorities and businesses, the GLA has announced an additional round of the fund, with three more business friendly licensing pilots set to be funded in 2023.



CAMDEN: CUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT, LICENSING POLICY REVIEW & PRE-APPLICATION SUPPORT

Developing a business friendly licensing policy that will balance the needs of the licensing authority, residents and businesses. It will also develop free and clear online guidance for those applying for a licence.

CAMDEN: CUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT, LICENSING POLICY REVIEW & PRE-APPLICATION SUPPORT

About the project

The London Borough of Camden has over 2,000 licensed premises and has the second largest hospitality and leisure sector in London. Although this represents a strong sector and there has been gradual growth in the number of businesses in the borough, post-pandemic the diversity of Camden's hospitality, entertainment and night time offer has decreased. This is particularly notable when looking at the number of dedicated premises for the LGBTQI+, female and Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse communities.

Alongside developing its first Camden night time Strategy in 2023, the GLA grant has funded research to develop a more innovative and business friendly Statement of Licensing Policy (SoLP). This includes a Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) of its two 'special policy areas (SPA)', Camden Town and Seven Dials, to address whether one or more CIAs should be published in the borough. This research will support Camden in ensuring that the borough maintains its strong hospitality, entertainment and night time offer, whilst increasing diversity within it, alongside balancing growth and change with residential amenity.

What they achieved

- Engaged one-to-one with 35 key business and community stakeholders to understand the impact of the current SoLP and CIA areas.
- Developed a smartphone app-based questionnaire for the borough's licensing officers to collect data from all 2,000 premises.
- A simplified licence application process – improving online forms together with free and clear online guidance for those applying.
- A pre-application advice service that covers the broad spectrum of licensing, enabling Camden businesses to understand the requirements and get assistance across all their licensing needs.

What went well

- Engagement with businesses and residents' groups. Strong interest from licensing solicitors and barristers.
- Running the SoLP review alongside the E&NT Strategy project has provided an opportunity – through the citizen assemblies – to shape the vision for the E&NT and how that feeds directly into licensing policy and the licensing service in general.
- The independent research gives a sanctioned view on whether current SPAs are relevant/required post pandemic and whether the evidence is there to support that.
- Workshops with other local authorities and stakeholders to understand Camden's offer and exchange best practice.

What would they do differently

- More time and resource in completing the premises survey, possibly conducting the survey before any external research is commissioned in order to provide accurate and up to date information that may be required.
- Better planning in gathering data sets that are pivotal to the research and any evidence bases.
- Collect data differently in the future to better support licensing policy and CIA review and the updated E&NT Strategy.

What the barriers were

- Delays in receiving third party data sets to support the research and evidence bases.
- Engagement with stakeholders – certain groups or characteristics were unavailable for engagement.
- Project was initiated at the same time as a major restructure of the licensing service was underway.

Future plans...

- Commence process of visiting the 2,000 licensed premises and collating the information to support the Statement of Licensing Policy and E&NT Strategy roll out (Summer 2023).
- Finalise Statement of Licensing Policy (Summer 2023).
- Present members with Cumulative Impact Assessment for a decision (Summer 2023).
- Further refine the online licensing portal.

Quotes from businesses

Business 1

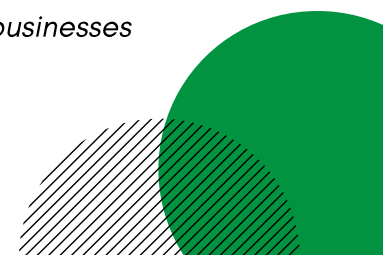
“Camden takes a sensible approach when considering an application in the SPAs [CIA areas] by not refusing all applications. But it's the restrictions on the hours and onerous conditions that often prove to be a barrier for my clients.”

Business 2

“There is a limited awareness amongst some Members. Licensing Panels don't always understand the difficulties in running a pub. The application process lends itself to a few residents to highlight one or two concerns that often influence the outcome of an application and does not place emphasis on all the things we do well almost all the time.”

Business 3

“The [current] Statement of Licensing Policy prevents growth and new opportunities, especially post pandemic with businesses needing to adapt to the changing landscape.”





ENFIELD: PUBLIC REALM AND OUTDOOR ACTIVATION

In Ashfield Parade (Southgate), Enfield Council has partnered with Jan Kattein Architects and collaborated with local businesses to improve outdoor trading and make Ashfield Parade more welcoming. This has been achieved through a proactive local business forum, regular community events and small-scale streetscape enhancements to create a more attractive and equitable public realm.

ENFIELD: PUBLIC REALM AND OUTDOOR ACTIVATION

About the project

The Town Centre Team at Enfield Council has produced a [Town Centre Action Plan](#) for Southgate Town Centre. This plan sets out an ambitious vision for Southgate where the community comes together in the town's high streets to enjoy the green spaces, public realm and a diverse business offer. Enfield Council also developed some innovative licensing practices during the pandemic to support businesses, particularly with regards to pavement licensing. Like other areas, Enfield saw a great uptake in pavement licensing from high street businesses. However, the borough noted some barriers and opportunities that needed addressing to improve this service and the approach taken to licensing generally.

The grant funding builds on the momentum of the above projects, providing further improvements to the public realm that will attract a larger and more diverse customer base for local businesses still recovering from the pandemic. The local authority is also reviewing its licensing application process to ensure that prospective businesses are supported in their applications and that the process is accessible.

What was achieved

- Ashfield Parade Business Forum was set-up with three monthly meetings, attended by five or six business managers/owners each time.
- Regular visits to the businesses allowed council officers to understand and respond to issues and concerns for businesses.
- A celebratory event took place in Ashfield parade, with more than 50 families taking part in activities on the pavements and in public spaces.
- Three businesses are being supported with outdoor trading licence applications.
- A "Community Event Guidance" document to support the organisation of small community events in Enfield is currently being prepared, which will include the celebratory event in Ashfield Parade as one of three case studies.
- The project has helped council officers to develop a flexible method of engagement with businesses, owners and managers (consisting of forums, one-to-one visits and newsletters) which will be rolled out to other areas of the council.

What went well

- Council officers developed more direct relationships with business owners and managers, demonstrating the council's ambition to deliver improvements to the area
- The forum provided the opportunity for businesses to meet regularly with council Officers and report issues to the council's attention.
- Businesses were keen on being involved in discussing public realm interventions. This conversation will continue in the coming months.

What would they do differently

- Visits to businesses and newsletters were more successful at securing engagement than the business forum due to time constraints on business leaders.
- Representatives of local community groups could have been invited to attend meetings to facilitate relationships and develop future plans.
- Business owners who are involved in successful examples of outdoor trading in the borough (i.e. Winchmore Hill) could have been invited to the forums to share lessons learnt.

What the barriers were

- A lack of trust towards the council was evident in early meetings. This has improved through regular meetings and with the council responding to issues reported by the businesses.
- Limited resources for local businesses to support and be part of community events – they supported in principle but were not significantly engaged in the Southgate anniversary event.

Future plans...

- A Community Event Guidance document is now being produced by Enfield Council to clarify the licensing process relating to community events.
- Responding to the feedback of businesses and residents and in line with the Southgate Town Centre Action Plan, Enfield Council has match funded the GLA grant to deliver public realm improvements to the streetscape of Ashfield Parade, to be informed by further business engagement.

Quotes from businesses

Business 1 – Newsagent

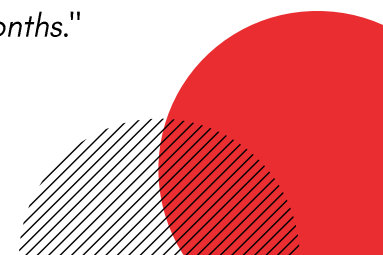
"It was good to connect with the council and to know they are committed to improving both the trading and the public realm of Ashfield Parade. It was also useful to be able to ask questions and report issues on the everyday running of the business."

Business 2 – Bakery

"It was great to see the area busier with kids on the day of the event. We usually have quite a lot of customers on Sunday but having so many families and the music here brought a different atmosphere. Hopefully, we can attract more families every day!"

Business 3 – Kouzina Express

"It was helpful to connect with the council and to receive support on our outdoor trading licence application, hopefully this will allow us to welcome more customers over the warmer months."





HACKNEY: OPENMARKETS. LONDON

Hackney has developed its Open Markets platform to accept trader applications for any of its market locations. The council has used trader profiles, promotional pages with videos and advertising to promote trading pitches and attract traders to work in Hackney.

HACKNEY: OPENMARKETS.LONDON

About the project

Working in partnership with other London boroughs and delivery partner Tabled Technologies, Hackney Council is leading on the roll out of a new streamlined street market trader licensing platform and campaign called OpenMarkets.London. The current application process for street market traders can be onerous, as each borough has their own paper-based application process and any trader wishing to trade at markets in different boroughs must make each application separately. OpenMarkets.London will be the tool that changes this.

The platform provides a single point of contact for traders to upload their relevant documentation and apply for a trading licence from multiple boroughs, saving them time and money whilst also making the process more accessible. Local authorities will also benefit from the tool as time and cost burdens associated with applications, such as processing, will be reduced. Boroughs will also have improved data on applications and increased communication with applicants via a messaging service built into the platform.

This project received initial funding from the Mayor's Resilience Fund. This new grant funding was used to expand the functionality of the platform and ensure its success with a view to rolling out the tool to other London boroughs in the future.

What was achieved

- A total of 91 applications received:
 - 51 applicants were interviewed, of which 45 are now trading.
 - 25 applications are under review.
 - Nine applications on a waiting list due to space being currently unavailable.
 - Six applications rejected as the type of trader was not suitable for any of the council's markets.
- The introduction of two new night markets since the launch of Open Markets which will be operating from April 2023, further strengthening the 24 hour offer:
 - Old Street Weekday Night Market - Hackney has received five applications for this location. Three have been approved and two are under review.
 - Kingsland Friday Night Market (this location also has a Saturday daytime operation) - Hackney has received and approved 10 applications for this location.

What went well

- Increase in trader applications vs 2022 (Jan to Mar) +20%
- A more efficient application system through the app with a clear audit trail and quicker response rates between the council and traders.
- The app enables officers to review submitted documents prior to the interviewing stage to see if there is a suitable location for this trader before any payments are taken.
- This has created a better customer experience with less refunds having to be made.

What would they do differently

- The system needs to be able to identify duplicate applications, which is being looked into.

What the barriers were

- A number of conversations are being held with different London boroughs to understand their initial reluctance to use the platform. The successful pilot will allay any concerns.

Future plans...

- Further develop the system so that the end to end of street trading licences are processed using Open Markets.
- Scaling up of the new platform to other council licensable activities.

Quotes from businesses

Business 1 - Takeda

"It made the process of applying for a pitch easy. I particularly like the chat option."

Business 2 - Ajama

"A couple of teething problems to start off with but once it was approved everything has been fine. I don't think I would have been able to establish my business without Hackney Council."

Business 3 - Broadway Vintage

"I have been trading with Hackney since 2004, and the current markets department seem to get what makes a good market."





HARROW: INNOVATIVE SUPPORT FOR LICENSEES

Streamlining information and resources, and creating a Licensed Business Activity Zone in partnership with HA1 BID, informed by consultation with businesses.



HARROW: INNOVATIVE SUPPORT FOR LICENCEES

About the project

The make-up of the Harrow local economy has meant that the impacts of the pandemic have been deep and wide ranging. 94% of businesses in Harrow are micro-businesses with less than 10 employees and the borough's high streets are comprised of 1,200 businesses offering retail, hospitality and office space. Like many councils, Harrow took immediate actions to address business challenges as a result of the pandemic. These challenges include unemployment, business closure and the long-term issues of low skills, pay and productivity. One of the ways that Harrow is addressing these issues is improving nightlife in the borough – focussing on hospitality & cultural businesses.

The grant was used to fund three strands of a project that aims to support licensees at these businesses. The first strand looked to streamline information and resources around licensing and environmental health so it is more accessible to these businesses. This included ensuring there is a strong online hub for this information. The second strand looked to implement an innovative Licensed Business Activity Zone, creating a new policy and application process and establishing a marked space for town centre businesses to use for al fresco dining. The final strand was to begin development of a long term aspiration to promote recognition of the Harrow Gold Standard – a type of accreditation for licensed premises that embodies everything Harrow expects of them.

What they achieved

- The Digital Services Team completed a 'deep dive' analysis of the existing licensing web pages with some really valuable feedback about who was using the site and how.
- The Enforcement Team commissioned a consultant to review the licensing and business web pages, with recommendations on how to improve navigation, accessibility and ease of use.
- Findings will be used to make improvements to the webpages in August 2023, supporting a smoother experience for the customer and a less labour intensive process for council staff.
- Following consultation with businesses, HA1 BID is applying for a premises licence to cover the town centre's newly created Business Licensed Activity Zone.

What went well

- Effective consultation and engagement with businesses, including to shape the project priorities and the protocols for the Business Licensed Activity Zone (BLAZ).
- Strong support from HA1 BID who assisted with the project and business engagement.
- Creation of the BLAZ allows for swifter delivery of markets, events and outdoor seating. The BID will be responsible for the premises licence, and they will then consider and grant swifter consent to compliant local businesses to trade.
- The streamlined online licence application process delivers a completely new and better customer experience for applicants.
- The digital team review helped officers really understand and then remove barriers to applicants.

What would they do differently

- Commission the external consultant to review the licensing information quicker.
- Not focus on the Harrow Gold Standard as it is now clear that this scheme is more complex and better placed for delivery after the completion of the other two strands.

What the barriers were

- There was a short timeframe to deliver the project.
- The new single portal website launch had to be delayed to align with the launch of the council's new corporate website.
- Key team members left during delivery of the project whilst there was a corporate internal freeze on recruitment.

Future plans...

- Launch the website in August 2023
- Launch the improved Food Toolkit in June 2023
- Launch the Business Licensed Activity Zone in August 2023
- Proceed with the Harrow Gold Standard in Autumn 2023.

Quotes from businesses

Business 1

"Businesses dislike PDF forms and the existing system has many duplicated forms – it's difficult to find the right one. The new system will help massively."

Business 2

"The [Business Licensed Activity Zones concept is] similar to Barcelona Las Ramblas strip – let's create something similar [in Harrow]."





ISLINGTON: AN ETHICAL APPROACH TO FOOD DELIVERY

Supporting the roll-out of Wings, a rider-owned food delivery platform, to new areas of the London Borough of Islington, leading to increased standards of conduct amongst riders and higher rider welfare, as well as lower levels of resident complaints in relation to delivery services.

ISLINGTON: AN ETHICAL APPROACH TO FOOD DELIVERY

About the project

Wings is a co-operative ethical food delivery company. It is owned by the riders, meaning they receive greater job security. They are paid the London Living Wage, receive sick pay and other benefits too.

The company is also committed to only using zero carbon vehicles to provide its services. It describes itself as 'good for riders, good for the environment and good for society'. The funding from this project was used to support, expand and promote the roll out of Wings across Islington, providing promotional materials for businesses and consumers and running workshops for the riders. The project presents an excellent opportunity to see how best to manage delivery services across other boroughs in the future, supporting more ethical employment in London's 24 hour economy.

What was achieved

- Out of more than 100 restaurants approached, 16 were confirmed to join the platform by the end of the GLA-funded part of the project. This is below the project's stated target of 30. However, the work of Wings continues and the co-operative anticipate to comfortably surpass the 30 restaurant target imminently.
- The project has fostered a greater understanding of challenges across the food delivery sector, and improved relationships between riders, restaurant operators and members of the public. These conversations included a rider workshop, several stakeholder meetings and presentations, and a public hackathon event.
- As a result of this project, Wings has hired five new riders and re-launched in March 2023. Wings is now focussing on consolidating in its existing trading area, continuing to recruit restaurants and driving customer growth. The project has left Wings in a healthier position than ever before, and more investment-ready as it seeks funding to scale further.

What went well

- 16 restaurants signed up, with a further 105 in active conversation.
- All of the new restaurants signed up have agreed to adhere to the Respect Charter as part of their business terms with Wings.
- As part of the GLA-supported relaunch, Wings has pioneered an innovative business friendly commission structure, based on a monthly membership fee of £100 and a commission of just 10% – far below the industry norm.

What would they do differently

- Conversations would ideally have been started earlier with organisations such as Angel BID, which represents 550 businesses and will support further rollout in their area, as recruiting and onboarding new businesses proved to be very time consuming.

What the barriers were

- Time constraints on business owners.
- The time needed to recruit and onboard new businesses.

Future plans...

Wings continue to secure sign up from the 105 pipeline businesses, with a target of 40+ restaurants signed up by the end of June 2023.

Quotes from businesses

Business 1 – Eddine, Owner, Angel Tagine

“It’s a real problem, the way Deliveroo and Uber riders behave, leaving food to go cold and so on. [Wings has] a differentiator – if your riders are polite and well behaved that will make a big difference. I hope Wings will be successful.”

Business 2 – Konstantin, Owner, PLANB

“Paying 30% commission [to the big platforms] makes no sense for my business. Now we have an option that makes financial sense, we can start taking delivery seriously and get exposure to many more customers.”

Business 3 – Ovidi, Owner, Delaterra

“Until now I never used delivery apps – it’s not right that these companies take all the profit and leave none for me. Wings’ 10% commission is much better for me. I’m proud to become a Wings-exclusive restaurant!”





SUMMARY OF IMPACT AND NEXT STEPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OF IMPACT

- At present around 200 businesses have benefited across the five pilots. This is projected to increase to 500 business by the end of 2023 with the full operation of all elements of each pilot.
- If all the pilots were adopted (in part or whole) by around half of London's boroughs, this could deliver a smoother/faster licensing experience and/or new/expanded trading opportunities for around 20,000 hospitality/E&NT businesses each year.
- A common benefit has been the simplification of the licence application process in three boroughs. This should benefit around 500 licensed businesses a year across those pilots.
- The provision of free (previously unavailable) pre-application advice service for hospitality/E&NT businesses is helping them get the right licence and reduce refusal rates in two boroughs. This should benefit around 200 businesses a year in those areas.
- New trading opportunities for market traders on both existing retail markets and new evening market sites are now fully operational in one borough. This should benefit up to 1,000 traders and around 100 trading after 6pm.
- The chance for restaurants to reduce delivery costs by up to 20% in one pilot. This could support 500 food businesses annually in one borough.
- The opportunities for E&NT businesses to trade al fresco in areas that were not previously considered appropriate for outside dining or market trading is now operational in three boroughs. This will likely help around 100 E&NT businesses a year.
- Business engagement has been key to all five pilots. All boroughs have opened up new lines of communication with individual hospitality businesses or formed local trader groups that did not previously exist.
- Internally, all five pilots confirmed they are 'doing licensing differently', better understanding the challenges of licensed businesses and are more focused on business needs than they were previously.

GENERAL FINDINGS

- All of the boroughs appreciated the simple application process for the GLA Business Friendly Licensing Fund, particularly given the relatively small grant funded figure.
- The boroughs were also grateful for the relative fluidity of the grant, whereby plans were permitted to pivot based on the needs of the businesses and the project, within the overall realms of the project aims. A more rigid approach that held delivery exactly to original project plans would have reduced impacts and the number of beneficiaries.
- There was a keen interest in the fund, especially considering the relatively small funded amount, with 13 boroughs submitting an application. This suggests that business friendly licensing is a keen area of interest for London's local authorities.
- The original grant funding "pot" was sufficient to support three projects. The GLA and partners were able to identify funding for an additional two projects, which was to the great benefit of this project.
- There were eight grant applications that were not progressed. Every application was considered viable and had potential to deliver tangible benefits to businesses.
- The boroughs and the project team formed a positive relationship throughout the grant funded project. Together with support in data collection and demonstrating impacts, the project team were able to support the boroughs through signposting to projects in other towns and cities in the UK and beyond that could provide ideas and inspiration to strengthen the GLA grant funded projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Disseminate the findings via networks such as the Institute of Licensing, Local Government Association, London Councils and other bodies representing licensing and regulation professionals.
- Stage a further update event with all five pilots in Autumn 2023 to demonstrate how they have embedded their projects and made them sustainable.
- Secure further funding and re-open the grant funding applications to new applicants and allowing previous unsuccessful applicants to review/update their applications from round one.
- Encourage greater engagement with London Licensing Managers Forum. Use the forum as a network to share findings and best practice between boroughs, potentially increasing opportunities for inter-borough working.

