

Proposal for Licensing Partnership Working with London Borough of Bexley

Introduction and background

The Licensing Partnership is enjoying its sixth year of running a successful partnership carrying out the management of three Licensing Teams and the administration of all processes and issuing of licences, permits and notices for Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Current partners within the Licensing Partnership



How it works

Licensing Officers are located at each local licensing authority, together with some administration support to assist customers visiting the Gateways and Tunbridge Wells Town Hall. This is supplemented with our Digital First project where we are assisting and encouraging our customers to self serve where this is their preference.

The Partnership has a single Administration Team which is based at the Sevenoaks offices. The Administration team process applications, permits and notices on behalf of the three Licensing Authorities.

All invoicing for annual fees is carried out via the Administration Team and suspension notices are issued from the Administration Team on behalf of the Licensing Partnership. We have agreed service level agreements to process applications depending on the statutory timeframes or agreements with the trade.

The Licensing Officers at each authority are responsible for their own policies, interaction regarding compliance with the legislation, compliance and enforcement, validation of new and variation applications for premises licences, hearings and direct reports.

The Licensing Partnership Manager has responsibility for the direct reports, management of the Licensing Partnership as a whole, budget setting, performance indicator setting and monitoring, co-ordination of Licensing Policies, FOI request responses, reporting to the Licensing Partnership Board and the individual Licensing Committees, service planning, liaison with Finance, HR, IT, Legal, Democratic Services and process engineering.

Each authority's data is held on a central database which is administered and maintained by the IT staff at Sevenoaks District Council. Officers at the partners' offices access the database via a portal and have access to their records and all the documentation for that application. All documentation is scanned in to a document management system (IDOX) on receipt in the post and is therefore available to all officers.

Update following the meeting on 11th February 2016 - the cost of joining the Licensing Partnership to London Borough of Bexley

At this meeting it was identified that Bexley will require administration support in the form of a full time administration officer.

- The proposal is that the London Borough of Bexley would interview the three potential employees for the post with Claire Perry involved in the interviews.
- The Licensing Partnership would TUPE the successful candidate to join the Administration Team of the Licensing Partnership. Initially, at least for the first year they would be based at the Bexley offices. However, time would need to be spent at Sevenoaks training on the new systems and there may be a requirement to work permanently at the Sevenoaks offices in the future.
- The role would be to support the Licensing Officers at Bexley, assist with the transference of the documentation from Bexley's system to that of the Licensing Partnership, carry out some of the processes and tasks on behalf of the Licensing Partnership and would be managed by the Licensing Partnership.

Version 3 – March 2016

- This would leave the London Borough of Bexley to resolve the future of the remaining two Licensing Assistants.
- The cost has been adjusted to include the additional processes and licences which were excluded from the initial proposal. For example, Regulated Stands, Explosives, Firework and Special Treatment Licences.
- It was also learnt at the meeting that the finance team send out invoices for annual fees for Licensing Act 2003 premises, Gambling Act 2005 premises, Gambling Act 2005 permits and Gambling Act 2005 lottery registrations. Therefore the transactional log spread sheet has been adjusted to only include the sending out of suspension notices for Licensing Act 2003 and chase up calls/contact with the other annual fees.

Therefore based on the above amendments the proportion of the work carried out on behalf of the London Borough of Bexley would be 17.3%.

The total cost of the Licensing Partnership for 2016/17 is £408,506 + £26,398 (cost of Licensing Administration Officer plus on costs). This equates to a cost for Bexley of **£75,221** however Bexley will also have the income for these additional processes.

There would be an additional cost of **£1,500** to migrate the address gazetteer into the partnership module and an estimated cost of **£3,000**.

Please note that the cost for each partner is calculated annually based on the number of transactions undertaken on average over the previous 3 full years. This current cost may go up as well as down. The calculations are outlined on a separate spreadsheet.

This cost would include:

- ▶ Managing of the Licensing Partnership and line management responsibilities of the staff at Bexley
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Licensing Act 2003 applications
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Gambling Act 2005 applications
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Animal Establishment applications
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Scrap Metal Dealer applications
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Animal establishment applications
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Sexual Entertainment Venue applications
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Regulated Stands applications
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Explosive applications
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Firework applications
- ▶ Administration (not inspection) of all Special Treatment applications
- ▶ Sending out suspension notices for annual fees that have not been received after 21 days. - The Licensing Officers at each authority are sent an updated

list each month of those premises where suspension notices have been served and the payment is still outstanding. Officers then carry out visits and take the appropriate action. Further debt recovery then falls to the authority to which the debt is owed.

- ▶ Processing of all income and reconciliation to ensure income is correctly attributed to the authority.
- ▶ Public Access via link for residents
- ▶ Consultee Access via link for consultees
- ▶ Weekly Excel spreadsheet sent to Councillors and interested parties
- ▶ Weekly Excel spreadsheets sent to Licensing Officers with updates of applications received in the past week
- ▶ FOI requests where data is required from the records
- ▶ Transferring data from the existing system to FRED UNI-form
- ▶ Online forms - access for customers to our bespoke online forms via web links and the annual retention fee and additional cost for adding a 4th partner
- ▶ Retention of documentation electronically
- ▶ Any upgrade and annual licence cost for IDOX UNI-form system - this year the Licensing Partnership will be paying approximately £5,000 for the latest upgrade
- ▶ Any upgrade and annual licence cost for Public/Consultee Access
- ▶ Any upgrades and annual licence cost for Victoria Forms (online forms)

The current services provided to existing partners

- ▶ All applications for Licensing Act 2003
- ▶ All applications for Gambling Act 2005
- ▶ All Hackney Carriage and Private Hire applications
- ▶ All Charity applications
- ▶ All Sexual Entertainment Venue applications
- ▶ All Scrap Metal Dealer applications
- ▶ All Animal Establishment applications for Maidstone Borough Council and we are developing a similar process for Sevenoaks District Council
- ▶ All Special Treatment applications for Maidstone Borough Council (moving in April 2016)
- ▶ All Boatman/Pleasure Boat applications for Maidstone Borough Council
- ▶ All Street Trading applications for Maidstone Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

IT

All authorities use the IDOX UNIFORM 9.1 (we will be upgrading to 10.1 in 2016) and IDOX DMS and Public and Consultee Access. The system is managed, on behalf of the Licensing Partnership, by the IT team at Sevenoaks and they maintain the security of the data. The UNIFORM module used (FRED) is a stand alone package that only the members of the Licensing Partnership can access. However, all of our

consultees (internal and external) have access to the documentation and can view this electronically.

Our Consultees respond to consultations via the Consultee portal and their responses insert directly into the back office system without the need for duplicate keystroke entry. It doesn't matter if the consultees are internal or external they have the ability to make their responses and view all the documentation concerning an application.

The vast majority of the letters, licences, permits and notices are created using templates within UNiform which reduces error levels and also allows for this documentation to be inserted into the Documentation Management System electronically without the need for the operator to save the document.

During the past 5 years we have put in place

- a Legal Agreement between the existing partners,
- an IT System Support and Maintenance Agreement for Members of the Licensing Partnership,
- a Document Retention Policy to reduce the amount of paper in the office,
- the ability for Consultees e.g. Police, Fire Service, Environmental Health etc. to respond electronically via Consultee Access negating the need for Officers to double key in this information,
- Public Access which allows residents and any other persons to view applications open for consultation online and make a comment should they wish to do so (Public Access will also be upgraded in 2016)
- Online forms which allow the customer 24/7 access to the Licensing Service, improving our levels of customer service and providing service efficiencies as the customer entered information is downloaded directly to the back office database, thereby reducing the need for double key entry which is required with the gov.uk online forms. The following forms are currently available online:
 - TENS
 - Personal licence - new
 - Personal licence - change of details - this one is a pdf and doesn't drop info into Uniform
 - Personal licence - renewal (now obsolete)
 - Scrap Metal dealers - site & collector
 - Premises licence - change of details - this one is a pdf and doesn't drop info into Uniform
 - Variation of DPS - this one is a pdf and doesn't drop info into Uniform
 - Taxi driver (HC & PH)
 - Taxi vehicle (HC & PH)
 - Taxi operator (PH)
 - Transfer of premises licence form

Version 3 – March 2016

- New lottery form
- Lottery returns form (new lottery form has already been used)
- Premises licence (new)
- Animal establishment forms - boarding,
- Animal establishment forms - breeding,
- Animal establishment forms - riding establishments,
- Animal establishment forms - pet shops,
- Animal establishment forms - dangerous wild animals
- Notification of gaming permit

Future developments and projects

Online forms

We are continuing to implement online forms until all of our forms are available online.

Sending invoices via email

During the next 12 months we will seek to implement the sending out of invoices electronically realising further savings to the Licensing Partnership.

Key Benefits of the Licensing Partnership

- ▶ Five years of experience running a high performing Licensing Partnership.
- ▶ A proven, flexible model that is adaptable to the needs of individual partners.
- ▶ Consultee Access which allows Consultees anywhere to respond online - would not be a barrier to cross County working.
- ▶ Best working practice for processing applications.
- ▶ Greater resilience and flexibility.
- ▶ Greater purchasing power for all commodities e.g. external vehicle plates where we saved more than £7,000 across the Partnership.
- ▶ Efficiency - one Licensing Officer/Senior Licensing Officer will do the first draft of new/revised policies or consultation responses which are then used as written by the other authorities or are tailored to achieve the sovereignty for that authority.

Version 3 – March 2016

- ▶ Proven ability to constantly review and improve processes to meet customer need and deliver efficiencies and savings e.g. electronic invoicing across the partnership for annual fee payments.
- ▶ Innovative use of online forms that increases the availability of the service outside of normal working hours, provides increased options for customers and creates efficiency, enhances accuracy and improves processing times.

Current service plan objectives (due to be reviewed in the New Year for 2016/17)

Objective 1	To manage the Licensing Partnership to deliver efficiency savings and achieve performance targets
Objective 2	Investigate further undertaking of licensing functions for other local authorities.
Objective 3	Utilise customer insight and bench marking information to inform service improvements as appropriate
Objective 4	Ensure all online forms are implemented and in use by customers
Objective 5	Undertake a programme of training for Members and officers, especially in light of the legislative changes and elections taking place in 2015
Objective 6	Transfer remaining licences that are being processed by MBC and TWBC so that they can be managed on FRED Uniform e.g. street trading, special treatments
Objective 7	Officers and Licensing Committees to consider opportunities for greater harmonisation of policies

Measuring our Performance

Performance Indicators and Target Setting

It has been agreed by the Licensing Partnership Board that for 2016 - 17 these targets will not change as it is anticipated that our performance may dip as we integrate the London Borough of Bexley in the Licensing Partnership.

It is part of this proposal that the London Borough of Bexley will accept these indicators and that they will not be review until 2017 - 18.

Code	Description	Collection period	2014 - 15 Target	2015 -16 Target
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LPI LIC 001	Percentage of all applications outstanding for more than one month	Monthly	<10%	<10%
LPI LIC 002	The percentage of valid personal licences processed within 2 weeks	Monthly	95%	95%
LPI LIC 003	Percentage of applications for new and variation of premises licences processed within 2 calendar months (from date of validation to issue date)	Monthly	95%	95%
LPI LIC 004	The percentage of valid temporary event notices processed within 72 hours	Monthly	90%	95%
LPI LIC 005	The percentage of driver and operator licenses issued within 10 days of validation	Monthly	90%	90%
MPI LIC 05a	Percentage of Hackney Carriage driver licenses issued within 10 days of validation	Monthly	90%	90%
MPI LIC 05b	Percentage of Private Hire driver licenses issued within 10 days of validations	Monthly	90%	90%
MPI LIC 05c	Percentage of Private Hire Operator licenses issued within 10 days of validations	Monthly	90%	90%
MPI LIC 012	Length of time from validation to issue of HC vehicle licence (MPI) - target 5 working days	Monthly	90%	90%
MPI LIC 013	Length of time from validation to issue of PH vehicle licence (MPI) - target 5 working days	Monthly	90%	90%
MPI LIC 017	The number of taxi enforcement checks completed (one per taxi vehicle)	Monthly	Maidstone 180 Sevenoaks 84 Tunbridge Wells 120	Maidstone 180 Sevenoaks 120 Tunbridge Wells 120

Data LIC 001	Total number of Hackney Carriage vehicle licences issued	Monthly		
Data LIC 002	Total number of Private Hire vehicle licences issued	Monthly		
Data LIC 003	Number of monthly premises licensing enforcement visits due that were undertaken	Monthly	Maidstone 180 Sevenoaks 238 Tunbridge Wells 120	Maidstone 180 Sevenoaks 230 Tunbridge Wells 180

Next steps:

- ▶ Arrange a meeting to include all relevant Members from the four Licensing Authorities and members of the Licensing Partnership Board.
- ▶ Submit reports to the relevant committees at each Local Authority seeking agreement to proceed with the partnership.
- ▶ Agree a Communication Plan for Bexley's licensees and manage the flow of correspondence.
- ▶ Set up meetings with Officers from the authorities to re-engineer the processes for the Licensing Partnership and the London Borough of Bexley.

Work to be covered by the Officers: -

Processes

- Annual fees - licensed premises, gambling annual fees, gaming permit annual fees & lottery annual fees.
- Confirming of Performance indicators
- Processes and documentation for Licensing Act 2003:
 - New premises licences
 - Variation premises licence
 - Personal licence
 - Temporary Event Notices
 - Change of details for premises licence
 - Change of details for personal licence
 - New Club Premises Certificate
 - Variation Club Premises Certificate

Version 3 – March 2016

- Review of Premises licence
- Transfer of premises licence
- DPS for premises licence
- Interim authority notice
- Section 178 notification
- Minor variation of premises licence/club premises certificate

Processes and documentation for Gambling Act 2005:

- New Premises licence
- Gaming machine permits
- Occasional use notice
- Lottery - new
- Lottery - return

Processes and documentation for

- Sexual Entertainment Venues
- Street collections
- House to house collections
- Street trading
- Animal boarding
- Dog breeding
- Pet Shops
- Riding Establishments
- Performing animals
- Dangerous Wild Animals
- Scrap metal dealer - site
- Scrap metal dealer - collectors
- Special treatments
- Explosives Storage Licence
- Fireworks Licence - sale all year
- Regulated Stands

Training officers at Bexley and within the Licensing Partnership.

Purchases of consumables etc.