

Licensing Committee

16th June 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Licensing Partnership Update Report 2016

Final Decision-Maker	Licensing Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	John Littlemore
Lead Officer and Report Author	Claire Perry
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

To note the performance of the Partnership as contained within the report.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Great People
- Great Place
- Great Opportunity

Timetable –

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Policy and Resources Committee	N/A
Council	N/A
Other Committee	N/A

Licensing Partnership Update Report 2016

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council is a member of a partnership with Sevenoaks District and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils which provides line management responsibilities to their respective licensing compliance/enforcement teams and an administration team at Sevenoaks to carry out the processing of licence applications and representations.
- 1.2 This arrangement provides each council with sovereignty over its policies and decision making processes whilst operating within a partnership that gives service resilience and capacity to deal with the fluctuating demands on the service through the year.
- 1.3 This report provides the Committee with an update on performance for the full financial year and outlines the objectives and priorities for the forthcoming year.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2009 it was agreed that both the line management and administration of the Council's licensing processes would be undertaken in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC). It was agreed that the administrative team processing licensing applications would be based at the offices of SDC with Licensing Officers continuing to be based at each council.
- 2.2 Each council retained responsibility for setting its licensing policies, compliance and enforcement strategies and decision making at Sub and Full Licensing committees. Claire Perry, the shared Licensing Partnership Manager, has line management responsibility for the operation of the administration team and the licensing officers of the three councils.
- 2.3 In January 2010 the new Licensing Partnership took effect and the back office functions started to be transferred to the administration hub based at SDC. The administration hub uses a single database to maintain the licensing records for the three authorities. The database structure enables reporting to be carried out on an individual authority basis and allows for the variances that still exist in the policies and procedures of the three authorities.
- 2.4 The Partnership is governed by an agreement made between the three councils and the Chief Officer/Heads of Service responsible for licensing at their respective authorities meet regularly as a Licensing Partnership Board to oversee performance and the direction of the Partnership. John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services at Maidstone sits on the Licensing Partnership Board.

2.5 The Licensing Partnership has completed 6 years of working together and is embarking on an exciting and challenging phase with the addition of a new partner, the London Borough of Bexley.

3. 2015 - 2016 PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 3.1 The performance of the Licensing Partnership has been extremely good and during the year there are no indicators that require explanation as to why they have not been met. The indicators for each of the three authorities and the combined Licensing Partnership results are attached as Appendix A.
- 3.2 The lowest value across the year was 98.18% against a target of 90% (Maidstone BC) which is an exceptional performance. To assist Members in quantifying the data a final column has been added to the data which provides information on how many applications the percentages relate to.
- 3.3 Premises visits and taxis checks continue to be carried out across the three authorities and Maidstone has a target to achieve 15 taxi checks per month and 15 premises visits per month.
- 3.4 Risk assessments are carried out following a premises visit so as not to place an undue burden on businesses. By carrying out a risk assessment the premises fall into a category, according to the risk posed by their types of licensing activity, type of premises, number of complaints about the premises and the confidence in the management at the premises. This category will then determine the frequency of future visits. This frequency will only change if there have been complaints about the premises in which case a visit may be made or if there have been changes at the premises such as personnel, changes in activities/conditions/layout etc. again the premises may be visited.

4. KEY ACTIVITIES IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS AND PROGRESS REGARDING PREVIOUS SERVICE OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 Over 3,845 applications under the various licensing regimes have been received and processed within the last year. That's 70 more than in the previous year.
- 4.2 There has been 3 Licensing Act sub-committee hearings at Maidstone Borough Council.
- 4.3 At Maidstone Borough Council two Private Hire drivers and two Hackney Carriage vehicles have been suspended. Two Private Hire driver's licenses have been revoked.
- 4.4 During the last 12 months more online forms have been brought into use. The Licensing Partnership engaged the services of Victoria Forms, an online form provider in the autumn of 2013. Officers have been working closely with Victoria Forms to integrate the online forms with the back office software used by the Licensing Partnership. This means, that wherever possible, the online forms once completed and submitted drop the information provided by the customer into the fields within the database. This negates the need for dual key entry.

4.5 The following forms are now 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
- 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
- Licensed Premises Gaming Machine permit

4.6 The following forms are due to be made available online within the next few weeks.

- Club machine gaming permit
- Premises variation form
- Minor variation premises form

4.7 Within the last month electronic notification of taxi renewal reminder letters have been implemented which send an email in the first instance and if an email address is not available a text message. This encourages taxi licensees to make their renewal applications online and removes the need for the Licensing Partnership to send out large quantities of paper.

4.8 Applications can either be made online or the applicant can download the forms from the three websites. Printed application forms are still available for collection at the three Licensing offices.

- 4.9 The Taxi and Private Hire policy for Maidstone Borough Council has been revised to allow scanned and photographic images of documentation with renewal applications.
- 4.10 During 2015 – 16 the cost of the Licensing Partnership was kept at £318,000 for the second year in succession.
- 4.11 The financial cost for each partner within the Licensing Partnership is calculated on a transactional basis taking an average number of applications for each type of application over the past 3 years of full data. For example the cost for 2016/17 was done using data from 2014/15, 2013/14 and 2012/13. There has been an increase for 2016/17 of just over £20,000 which includes the 1% increase in the cost of salaries and performance related pay for some members of the team. It also includes the cost of the temporary member of the Administration Team being made a permanent post in preparation for the addition of the fourth partner.
- 4.12 The Licensing Partnership Document Retention Policy and ‘paper-less’ office project have been progressed in the past year with 8 filing cabinets stripped down and tidied up. Only the documentation outlined in the Document Retention Policy is retained which makes future filing much quicker and easier. This has been a substantial project undertaken by the Administration Team at Sevenoaks which has been carried out in conjunction with the day to day work.
- 4.13 In 2015 – 16 the Administration Team working on behalf of the three authority partners processed 6221 tasks which included the processing and issuing of licences. An additional 28 tasks compared to last year.
- 4.14 Work has begun on the online Knowledge Test and Boat and Boatmen licences are now processed and issued by the Licensing Partnership.
- 4.15 Every year the Licensing Partnership issues just under 1,500 invoices for payments due to the authorities. Work continues with the project in recovering the outstanding annual fees and suspension notices have been issued for those payments that have not been paid.
- 4.16 The Licensing Partnership continues to provide 4 weeks of valuable work experience at the Hub for people sent from the Job Centre placement scheme.

5 SERVICE OBJECTIVES FOR 2016/17 AND PLANNED SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

- 5.1 Objective 1 - To manage the Licensing Partnership to deliver efficiency savings and achieve performance targets.
- a) This is ongoing and performance of the Administration Team is monitored on a weekly and monthly basis.
 - b) 1:1 meetings with staff are carried out monthly
 - c) there is a Licensing Partnership team meeting once a month and

d) the Licensing Partnership Board meets 4 times a year.

5.2 Objective 2 - Investigate further undertaking of licensing functions for other local authorities.

a) It is proposed to include the London Borough of Bexley as a fourth partner from 1st September 2016.

4.1 Objective 3 - Seek further efficiency savings in processes and use of online facilities.

- a) Use of online forms; See above
- b) changes in renewal process for taxis licensees; See above
- c) ongoing changes to the web pages;
- d) introducing a separate customer survey questionnaire to improve feedback from customers other than those who submit their applications online; In progress
- e) reducing the face to face contact in reception and the gateways.

As part of this action members of the Licensing Partnership have met with colleagues in the Smarter Digital Services, based at Tunbridge Wells to seek further efficiencies and customer service improvements for the taxi service. Work is underway in developing the online Knowledge Test and Members will be provided with a demonstration at a Licensing Committee later this year.

5.3 Objective 4 - Ensure all online forms are implemented and in use by customers. See paragraph 4.4 – 4.6 above.

5.4 Objective 5 - Undertake a programme of training for Members and officers. Ensure all new Members on each Licensing Committee receive appropriate training.

- a) The Licensing Partnership will always welcome Members to experience the Administration team in action and learn more about how the Licensing Partnership operates.

5.5 Objective 6 - Officers and Licensing Committees to consider opportunities for greater harmonisation of policies.

5.6 Objective 7 - Health, Safety and Well Being of Staff

6 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 The service objectives will be implemented.

6.2 An update report will be brought annually to the Licensing Committee at the first meeting in the new municipal year.

7 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	None	[Head of Service or Manager]
Risk Management	A risk assessment is undertaken on an annual basis regarding the service objectives and reviewed regularly.	[Head of Service or Manager]
Financial	Financial implications have been dealt with in the body of the report.	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing	No impact at Maidstone Borough Council	[Head of Service]
Legal	This is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership.	[Legal Team]
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	No impact, this is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership.	[Policy & Information Manager]
Environmental/Sustainable Development	No impact, this is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership.	[Head of Service or Manager]
Community Safety	No impact, this is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership.	[Head of Service or Manager]
Human Rights Act	No impact, this is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership.	[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement	No impact, this is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership.	[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
Asset Management	No impact, this is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership.	[Head of Service & Manager]

8 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: End of Year Performance report
 - Appendix B: Service Plan for the Licensing Partnership
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9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Revenue tracker 2015/16