

Licensing Partnership update report 2020

Final Decision-Maker	Licensing Committee
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	John Littlemore
Lead Officer and Report Author	Sharon Bamborough
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

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

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the performance of the partnership as contained in this report be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Council	n/a
Other committees	n/a

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	None	Sharon Bamborough
Risk Management	A risk assessment is undertaken on an annual basis regarding the service objectives and reviewed regularly	Sharon Bamborough
Financial	Any financial implications have been dealt with within the body of the report	Sharon Bamborough
Staffing	No impact on Maidstone Borough Council	Sharon Bamborough
Legal	This is a report to update on the progress and performance of the licensing partnership	Sharon Bamborough
Privacy and Data Protection	No impact. This is a report to update on the progress and performance of the licensing partnership	Sharon Bamborough
Equalities	No impact. This is a report to update on the progress and performance of the licensing partnership	Sharon Bamborough
Crime and Disorder	No impact. This is a report to update on the progress and performance of the licensing partnership	Sharon Bamborough
Procurement	No impact. This is a report to update on the progress and performance of the licensing partnership	Sharon Bamborough

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council is a member of the Licensing Partnership with Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and London Borough of Bexley, which provides line management responsibilities to their respective licensing enforcement teams and an administration team at Sevenoaks to carry out the processing of licence applications, notices, permits and representations.
- 2.2 The Licensing Partnership has completed 9 years of working together, with London Borough of Bexley becoming a partner as of 31st October 2016.
- 2.3 This arrangement provides each council with sovereignty over its policies and decision making processes whilst operating within a partnership that gives resilience and capacity to deal with the fluctuating demands on the service through the year.
- 2.4 This report is an annual update on the performance and activity of the Licensing Partnership.
- 2.5 In 2009 it was agreed that both the line management and administration of the Council's licensing processes would be undertaken in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC). It was agreed that the administrative team processing licensing application would be based at the offices of Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) with Licensing Officers continuing to be based at each council.
- 2.6 Each Council retained responsibility for setting its licensing policies, compliance strategies and decision making at Sub and Full Licensing Committees. The Licensing Partnership Manager had line management responsibility for the operation of the administration team and the Licensing Officers of the three councils.
- 2.7 In January 2010 the new Licensing Partnership took effect and the back office functions started to be transferred to the administration team based at SDC. The Licensing Partnership 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 basis and allows for the variances that still exist in the policies and procedures of the three authorities.
- 2.8 The Licensing 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 four times a year as a Licensing Partnership Board to oversee performance and the direction of the Partnership. John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services at Maidstone Borough Council is currently the Chair of the Licensing Partnership Board.
- 2.9 In 2017, following the unexpected passing of the Licensing Partnership Manger the post was re-evaluated and made a Head of service role. The

current Head of Licensing, Sharon Bamborough, has nearly 30 years' experience in licensing and comes from a London local authority background.

- 2.10 The Head of the Licensing Partnership also represents the south east region (72 authorities) on the LGA Licensing Forum as well co-chairing the London Licensing Managers Forum.

3. 2019-2020 PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 The performance of the Licensing Partnership has been generally high performing despite many challenges of the past year, which included:
- A restructure of the central processing (Hub) team at Sevenoaks
 - Re-design and implementation of many processes which created a considerable amount of work, and
 - staff turnover / shortages within the Hub team
 - addition of new areas of work (special treatments licensing for Bexley moving to Hub team)
 - some special projects to identify and resolve outstanding documentation on taxi licensing

The indicators for each of the four authorities are attached as **Appendix A.**

- 3.2 **Restructure** - The Hub team at Sevenoaks was restructured to deliver better performance and give development opportunities to existing staff. Following consultation and interviews the new structure went live on 1st November 2019. This was largely well received by staff and morale was boosted. The hard work was started on redesigning many of the processes to make them more efficient and but there is still much to review. The Hub team has a new manager (Michael Moss) who will also be a deputy for the Head of Licensing on occasion.
- 3.3 **General** - The Hub team at Sevenoaks has gone through a number of staff changes (mainly due to staff leaving for promotion/progression elsewhere) which has meant that the team has had many new officers trying to learn the job which is a very demanding role in respect of the information they are expected to absorb and processes they need to learn (in the last year there have been 4 new members of staff on a team of six officers).
- 3.4 The general processing and consultation on applications within timeframe has been maintained but there will have been times when performance has slipped due to staff shortages and lack of fully trained team (annual leave etc.)
- 3.5 In respect of the number of In respect of enforcement work, following a revision of the performance measures by the Head of the Partnership in July 2018, much more of the workload of the officers is being reported which is reflective of the total work carried out (previously only compliance visits were being reported). Now, all investigations of

complaints and requests for advice/ information and other site visits are reported in addition to the number of premises compliance visits.

- 3.6 In respect of the applications outstanding more than a month – In respect of the applications outstanding more than a month after consultation – this generally occurs when the application needs to be referred to a hearing.

Key Achievements

- 3.7 The Partnership handled a very large amount of work in 2019/20. The performance measures should be read in conjunction with the entire volumes of work delivered. The headlines of the performance are as follows:
- In this time period, over 10,100 applications, notices, permits and pieces of work were received and carried out.
 - From this total, 2508 pieces of work were for Maidstone.
 - Over 20,000 emails were received in the main Licensing inbox and actioned for all four partners
 - Taking into account the different amounts of time needed for different types of applications, and the differing nature of the work carried out for some of the partners, Maidstone's share accounted for just over 30% of the work of the entire partnership in 2019/20.
- 3.8 During 2019 – 20 the cost of the Licensing Partnership was just under £498,000 of which Maidstone's share was just under £155K
- 3.9 Reviews of The Taxi Licensing Policy, Taxi Policy, Street Trading, Fees and an Emissions Policy update which has now been superseded by the carbon neutral were carried out by the Maidstone licensing team.
- 3.10 A deep dive on timings and costings on all processing was undertaken by the Head of Licensing in the summer of 2019 to ensure they were still accurate or needed adjustment. This was a major piece of work which had not been done for many years, and with technology developments and reviews of procedures, it was the right time to do this to ensure the partners could be confident that the costings were fair and based upon recent analysis. This resulted in a slight increase of 1.27% to Maidstone percentage costs for the following years (in the region of £6k).

4. PERFORMANCE AGAINST SERVICE PLAN OBJECTIVES FOR 2018/19

- 4.1 Objective 1 - *To manage the Licensing Partnership to deliver efficiency savings and achieve performance targets.*
- This is ongoing and performance is monitored on a weekly and monthly basis. Please see Appendix A for a report on Key Performance Indicator targets.

- 1:1 meetings with staff are carried out monthly (or as needed) and
- the Licensing Partnership Board meets 4 times a year.

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

- **Result:** we have not received any requests or expressions of interest during this year and have not actively pursued any due to wanting to focus on the Hub team restructure and the improvements which were needed

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

- Review (ongoing) processes and procedures of Hub team officers and streamline / change to save time on unnecessary record keeping
Result: work in progress (still more to do)
- Consider current practices re face to face meetings (taxis) and pick up of plates – move over to sending by post where appropriate
Result: achieved (resulting in time savings and reduction in costs)
- Explore feasibility of online solutions for document checks for taxi applications to reduce face to face visits the face to face visits
Result: explored, but not feasible currently (no systems available)

4.4 Objective 4 - *Ensure all online forms are implemented and in use by customers and explore other software solutions*

- The library of on line forms should implemented across the four partners – to include new forms for Bexley (Special Treatments) and any updates needed for existing ones
Result: most forms now online and remainder are currently in development (e.g. special treatments)
- Arrange for purchase and installation of electronic record management system, Enterprise (from Idox)
Result: still in testing and hopefully to be rolled out throughout partnership in July/August 2020
- Arrange for purchase and installation of electronic enforcement software for use out and about, called Mobile App (from Idox)
Result: this has been put on hold until further information is obtained about the effectiveness of the technology (some anecdotal evidence from other authorities suggests it may not be as interactive as we thought)

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

Result: training has been given as and when required. In addition, the officer at Tunbridge Wells organised a special training session by the

gambling commission which was offered to Members across the partnership. This was very well received.

4.6 Objective 6 - Revision of Policies & Procedures

- Start the review LA03 Policies across the Partnership in readiness for January 2021 when they must come into force
Result: achieved - work has started and continues in the current year.
- Review Street trading policy at Maidstone regarding designation of street trading pitches
Result: *carried over to 2020/21 service plan at request of Maidstone (due to go to licensing committee 18th June 2020)*
- Re-visit (with Legal Services) the approach to street trading in Sevenoaks with a view to assessing what would need to be done to implement such a policy, and report back to Chief Officer (this comes from a discussion at Health Board as to whether anything can be done to stop fast food vans etc. parking up near schools, which contributes to childhood obesity)
Result: Achieved – initial discussion with Legal services and Chief Officer showed no demand for this, therefore, at this time, no need to adopt legislation or implement policy
- Investigate feasibility and implement if approved, the charging for pre-application advice to licence applicants
Result: implemented
- Review outcome of Street trading farmers market consultation at Tunbridge Wells regarding designation of a farmers market, and take to committee with appropriate recommendations
Result – achieved and due to go to committee in June 2020
- A review of the Hub Team Admin procedures and update where necessary
Result: A lot of progress has been made in streamlining and updating procedures but due to high number of procedures and practices and Hub Team restructure this could not be completed in year – carried over to 2020/21 service plan for completion
- To review taxi policies in Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks as needed.
Result: Achieved
- To deliver the implementation of the ULEV taxi charging points in conjunction with Kent CC following successful bid for funding
Result: partly achieved (work in progress).

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

- Ensure risk assessments are carried out and reviewed as appropriate and at least once a year.
Result: achieved
- Ensure 1:1 meetings are carried out on a regular basis.
Result: achieved

The new service plan for 2020/21 is attached as Appendix B

5. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: End of year performance statistics
- Appendix 2: Licensing Partnership Service Plan for 2020/21

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None.