

The Licensing Partnership – Annual Update

Final Decision-Maker	LICENSING COMMITTEE
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Sharon Bamborough, Head of the Licensing Partnership
Classification	Public
Wards affected	ALL

Executive Summary

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

Purpose of Report

Noting

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To note the performance of the Licensing Partnership as contained within the report and to ask the Head of the Licensing Partnership to continue to provide an annual update on the Licensing Partnership activity to the Licensing Committee each municipal year

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Licensing Committee	13 June 2024

The Licensing Partnership – Annual Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
Cross Cutting Objectives	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
Risk Management	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
Financial	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
Staffing	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
Legal	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Helen Ward, Lawyer, Midkent Legal team
Privacy and Data Protection	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
Equalities	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership

Public Health	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
Crime and Disorder	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
Procurement	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
Biodiversity and Climate Change	<i>No implications have been identified</i>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council is a member of the Licensing Partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, London Borough of Bexley and Sevenoaks District Council, 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 14 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.

2023 – 2024 Performance report

- 2.5 The performance of the Licensing Partnership has been generally very good.
- 2.6 The indicators for each of the four authorities and the Maidstone results are attached as **Appendix A**

- 2.7 This year has been more of a return to normal following the previous few years (which were challenging due to the Pandemic and its after-effects).
- 2.8 The general processing and consultation on applications within timeframe has been maintained but where there have been times when performance may not have hit targets this would have been due to various factors, such as the usual annual leave, and staff vacancies/recruitment/training.
- 2.9 The Partnership handled a large amount of work in 2023/24; applications volumes have returned to pre-pandemic levels. 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, 9700 applications, notices, permits and other pieces of work were received / carried out across the partnership.
 - From this total, over 2730 pieces of work were for Maidstone.
 - 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 of processing work accounted for approx. 28% of the work of the entire partnership in 2023/24
 - Just under **28,400** emails were received in the main Licensing inbox and actioned for all four partners – Maidstone's share was 7,208
 - **7,661** calls were received to main licensing hotline and dealt with by the Hub team for all four partners - Maidstone's share was 2015.

3. Performance against Service Plan objectives 2023/24

- 3.1 Objective 1: *To oversee and lead 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 and regular face to face meeting with staff are carried out routinely
 - the Licensing Partnership Board meets 4 times a year.

Performance against the targets is included in **Appendix A**

- 3.2 Objective 2: *Be open and proactive about undertaking of licensing functions for other local authorities.*

Result: achieved, in that we remain open to discussion and approach, but have not received any expressions of interest. Our officers attend multi LA meetings across Kent and report back that they use those opportunities to promote the partnership when appropriate.

- 3.3 Objective 3: *Seek further efficiency savings*

- Continuous review of processes and procedures of Hub team officers and streamline / change as and when requested by partner officers. This year the following processes were reviewed:

1. TENs
 2. Personal licences
 3. Transfer of premises licence
 4. DPS variations
 5. Taxis - temporary replacement vehicle
 6. Taxis – drivers
 7. Taxis – Vehicles
 8. Taxis - Operators
- Review of online facilities including continued development of online application forms
 - Review of back office system database and assess against other alternative providers (MM & SB)

Result: achieved (resulting in time savings or better working practices)

3.4 Objective 4: *Undertake necessary projects which deliver or enhance the service provision - 2023-24 projects:*

- *Action emails from Companies House which advise on changes to company status etc* **result: achieved**
- *MBC only – complete the transfer of electronic data from old software system to Idox/Uniform so that records are complete and historic data is available to all* **result – started but ongoing**
- *HUB team –re Premises licences issued under Licensing Act 2003, carry out the review of new rateable values (RVs) from Valuation Office Agency and update the database with any changed RVs before invoices are raised (this review from VOA happens every 5 years)* **result - achieved**
- *New procedure for pre-application advice to be agreed and introduced (SB)* **result – produced but not implemented yet (awaiting testing)**
- *New procedure for recording of complaints / investigations – to be recorded on the database going forward once introduced (SB)* **result – achieved but in testing phase with SDC**
- *Have the current partnership agreement reviewed and brought up to date in terms of format (SB / legal)* **RESULT – redrafted but Board still considering what changes they want implemented**

3.5 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

3.6 Objective 6: *Revision of Policies & Procedures*

- *In 2023, SB to review Cumulative Impact Area policy for LBB* **(achieved)**
- *In 2023, SB to review the Pavement licensing policy once confirmation is received that the scheme will be made permanent and in line with new legislation* **(achieved)**
- *To review taxi policies in Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks as and when needed. (Senior Licensing Officers)* **(achieved)**
- *To continue to take part in the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Implementation Plan lead by KCC (for SDC/MBC/TWBC only) (SB and Senior*

Licensing Officers) which may lead to revision of taxi policies re green vehicles (**achieved**)

3.7 **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
- Ensure staff have complied with any employer requirements in terms of completing workstation assessments both in office and at home if working from home occurs.
Result: achieved

The new service plan for 2024/25 is attached as **Appendix B**

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To note the information, and ensure the Licensing Committee are updated on the performance of the Licensing Partnership
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5. RISK

- 5.1 There are no risks as it is for information only

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Not applicable
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Not applicable as this report is on performance for the previous financial year
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Performance data
 - Appendix B: Service plan for 2024/25
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.