

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MONDAY 7 OCTOBER 2013

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report prepared by Claire Perry

1. LICENSING PARTNERSHIP

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To receive an Annual Report on the performance of the Licensing Partnership for the financial year 2012/13.

1.2 Recommendation

1.2.1 That Licensing Committee notes the attached report.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 In 2009 it was agreed that the administration of the Licensing process would be undertaken in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. It was agreed that the administrative hub processing the licensing applications would be based at Sevenoaks District Council.

1.3.2 In the first three years there were significant problems in the establishment of the Partnership relating to the transfer of information from the other authorities to Sevenoaks District Council. These problems relating to data transfer led to delays in the transfer of all the licensing functions to Sevenoaks and the completion of this transfer was not concluded until November 2011.

1.3.3 This situation led to a backlog in work from new and existing licence applications which required additional staff resource in order to clear. That resource was given to the Licensing Partnership Manager with the view that the backlog should be cleared by the end of the financial year. The administrative hub has worked very hard and the backlog has been cleared and all work is currently on schedule. It was cleared by November 2012.

1.3.4 Service Plan

1.3.5 The Partnership's Service Plan for 2012/13 had the following seven service objectives. The Licensing Partnership Board agreed the service plan and set the targets. The current position on each of these is set out below.

1.3.6 1. Manage and oversee the Licensing Partnership and contribute to annual efficiency savings.

It has not been possible to advance the efficiency savings set out in this objective because of the previously explained backlog. With the backlog now cleared work has begun on identifying the exact staffing levels required for the ongoing service. A saving of £17500 for 2012/13 has already been identified as a result of the reapportionment of the Hub costs according to the formula set out in the partnership legal agreement. The next stage will be to look at the operation of the service and to break down its administrative functions to see if any changes can be made to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Work is already underway on streamlining processes to reduce the time taken for administrative functions.

1.3.7 2. Continue to develop the 'Centre of Excellence' for all Council licensing functions

1.3.8 The same comments on work processes in relation to 1. are relevant to this objective.

1.3.9 3. Investigate further undertaking of licensing functions for other local authorities

1.3.10 No action has as yet been taken with regard to looking at other local authorities as set out in the service plan. It was agreed that the first step for the Partnership was to ensure its own systems were working effectively before looking to promote itself to other bodies. However, work on this should commence in late summer 2013, as set out within the Service Plan.

1.3.11 4. Improve public perception of services provided by using the feedback from customers to change processes

1.3.12 This is an ongoing process. Work with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has just concluded and discussions with the team have identified a number of actions which will begin to be implemented across the Partnership from autumn 2013. It was an extensive project involving their Business Development Unit. Further details can be provided but it is an ongoing project.

- 1.3.13 5. Provide innovative solution to minimise data inputting by administration staff e.g. development of on line application forms
- 1.3.14 The Licensing Partnership Manager has had discussions with the current computer software supplier IDOX for a licensing system which included the facility for online forms and they have indicated that they are unlikely to undertake any work in this area in the near future. However, the Manager has identified a company which has worked with and developed on line forms elsewhere. Discussions have been undertaken with this company and with the computer software supplier IDOX to see how such forms could be introduced within the partnership and linked to the existing computer system.
- Those forms should be introduced and functioning by the autumn. This will ensure that the impact of the improvement of the service and the reduction of costs can take place in the financial year 2014/15. The procurement process has been undertaken at SDC by the IT Department and the proper procedures have been followed. The online forms are integrated so that the information that is input by the customer will be dropped into the back office database. This will mean that instead of officers typing in information from hard copy forms or from the pdf forms that are provided by the Government's on line forms the fields will only need to be checked to ensure that we have the required information.
- 1.3.15 6. Improve existing web pages across the Partnership
- 1.3.16 This is currently being actioned in conjunction with the introduction of the new Web pages at MBC.
- 1.3.17 7. Benchmarking against other local authorities and the Post Office
- 1.3.18 No action has been taken with regard to this objective as work has concentrated on the clearing of the backlog. It is now expected that in the next year this objective will be pursued.
- 1.3.19 The new service plan objectives agreed for 2013/14 are as follows:-see 1.3.5

Service	Service Objectives	Timescale	Responsible
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Objective Number			Officer(s)
1	To manage the Licensing Partnership to deliver efficiency savings and achieve performance targets.	March 2014	Claire Perry
2	Investigate further undertaking of licensing functions for other local authorities.	March 2014	Claire Perry
3	Improve public perception of services provided by using feedback from customers to change processes.	Ongoing – evaluate Nov 13	Claire Perry
4	Provide innovative solutions to minimize data inputting by administration staff e.g. development of on line application forms.	Autumn 2013	Claire Perry
5	Improve the web page information available across the Licensing Partnership.	Sept 2013	Claire Perry
6	Benchmarking against other local authorities and the Post Office.	March 2014	Claire Perry

1.3.20 Performance Data

1.3.21 The Licensing Committees and the Cabinet Member will in future receive quarterly reports updating them on the performance of the Licensing Partnership and the data produced for Members in that report will be as follows:-

Licensing Committee

- Number of vehicle checks carried out – target – fifteen per month.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 39.
This figure is slightly down for the quarter as a result of there being fewer vehicles in locations where they should not be. This reflects that enforcement is being effective.
- The number of Hackney Carriage Vehicle licences issued within 5 working days – target - 75%.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 100%.
This equates to 8 out of 8 applications.
- The number of Private Hire Vehicle licences issued within 5 working days – target - 75%.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 82%.
This equates to 46 out of 55 applications.
- The number of Hackney Carriage/Dual Driver licences issued within 30 working days – target -75%.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 100%.
This equates to 4 out of 4 applications.
- The number of Private Hire Driver licences issued within 30 working days – target - 75%.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 91%.
This equates to 24 out of 26 applications.
- The number of Private Hire Operator licences issued within 30 working days – target – 75%.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 100%.
This equates to 11 out of 11 applications.

Licensing Act 2003

- Number of licensed premises enforcement visits – risk assessments) undertaken in each month –target - fifteen per month and outcomes.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 47 visits for the first quarter.
- Percentage of valid personal licence applications to be processed within two weeks – target - 95%.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 88.6%.
This equates to 26 out of 29 applications being processed within the target of 2 weeks. The statutory requirement is to

process these applications within 3 months. Processes are being reviewed to ensure this target will be achieved.

- Percentage of temporary event notices processed within 48 hours – target - 90%.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 99%.
This equates to 112 notices out of 113 notices.
- The number of valid premises licence applications received and issued within two calendar months – target – 95%.
Current Performance Level to the end of June 2013 – 89%.
This equates to 13 out of 14 applications. The licence that wasn't issued within two calendar months was referred to a licensing hearing due to valid representations being received.

1.3.22 There is now no backlog in terms of the applications being processed through the Partnership and the Licensing Partnership Manager is reviewing the staffing structure of the section to ensure that efficiency savings can be made within the next financial year. Initial consideration of this matter seems to identify a saving of about £10,000 for Maidstone can be achieved. Additionally it is felt that income within the full service as a whole will increase over the forthcoming year and that a further increase in income of £5,000 can be agreed for licensing budgets.

1.3.23 At the last meeting of the Corporate Leadership Team it was enquired when the right to challenge could be taken up in respect of the Licensing Partnership. Following discussion with the Property and Procurement Manager on this issue he confirmed the right to challenge for Licensing would not occur until after the end of the next period of two years for the Partnership Legal Agreement. The date of the agreement was earlier this year.

1.3.24 Financial
The overall cost of line management and administration of the licensing functions through the Partnership for the three authorities is £418,000 per year.

The Partnership agreement contains a mechanism for apportioning this cost between the three authorities based on the level of transactions for each authority. The costs are split on the basis of the mean average of the transactions of the authorities for the three financial years ending on the 31 March of the year before the start of the financial year to which the split will be applied.

For 2013/14 the split is TWBC 30.7% MBC 36.5% SDC 32.8%

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The report is for information only.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The information given in this report sets out the performance of the Licensing Partnership to date and the actions taken and planned to achieve Corporate and Customer Excellence including achieving an effective value for money service.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 The actions taken by the council in recent times has put the Council in a stronger position.

1.7 Other Implications

1.	Financial Note as set out in body of report	x
2.	Staffing	x
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	

The financial and staffing implications arising from the partnership are set out in the body of this report.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

1.8.2 Income position.

1.8.3 Background Documents

1.8.4 None.