

## LICENSING PARTNERSHIP UPDATE REPORT 2016

### Licensing Committee - 17 May 2016

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

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**This report supports the Key Aim of sustainable economy.**

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Firth (Legal and Democratic Services)

**Contact Officer(s)** Richard Wilson Ext. 7067

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### **Recommendation to Licensing Committee**

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

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**Reason for recommendation:** To ensure the Licensing Committee are updated on the performance of the Licensing Partnership.

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### **Introduction and Background**

- 1 The Council is a member of the Licensing Partnership with Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Borough 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 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 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.
- 4 This report is an annual update on the performance and activity of the Licensing Partnership.

- 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.
- 6 Each Council retained responsibility for setting its licensing policies, compliance strategies and decision making at Sub and Full Licensing Committees. Claire Perry, the Licensing Partnership Manager, has line management responsibility for the operation of the administration team and the Licensing Officers of the three councils.
- 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.
- 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. Richard Wilson, Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services at Sevenoaks is currently the Chair of the Licensing Partnership Board.

#### **2015 - 2016 Performance report**

- 9 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.
- 10 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.
- 11 Premises visits and taxis checks continue to be carried out across the three authorities and Sevenoaks have increased the target for taxi checks to 10 per month. 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.

### **Key Activities in the last six months and progress regarding service plan objectives**

- 12 Over 3845 applications, notices and permits were received and issued during 2015 - 16 of which 1383 were for Sevenoaks District Council.
- 13 During the last 12 months more online forms have been brought into use. Officers have been working closely with the external software suppliers Victoria Forms.
- 14 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
- 15 The following forms are due to be made available online within the next few weeks.
  - Premises variation form
  - Minor variation premises form
- 16 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. Applications can either be made online or the applicant can download the forms from the three websites.

- 17 The Taxi and Private Hire policy for Sevenoaks District Council has been revised to allow scanned and photographic images of documentation with renewal applications.
- 18 During 2015 - 16 the cost of the Licensing Partnership was kept at £318,000 for the second year in succession.
- 19 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 which has been carried out in conjunction with the day to day work.
- 20 In 2015 - 16 6221 tasks were carried out on behalf of the three authorities.
- 21 Work has begun on the online Knowledge Test and Boat and Boatmen licences are now processed and issued by the Licensing Partnership.

#### **Service Objectives for 2015/16 and planned service improvements**

- 22 Objective 1 - To manage the Licensing Partnership to deliver efficiency savings and achieve performance targets.
  - a) This is ongoing and performance is monitored on a weekly and monthly basis.
  - b) 1:1 meetings with staff are carried out monthly and
  - c) the Licensing Partnership Board meets 4 times a year.
- 23 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.
- 24 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.
- 25 Objective 4 - Ensure all online forms are implemented and in use by customers - see paragraph 14 above.
- 26 Objective 5 - Undertake a programme of training for Members and officers. Ensure all new Members on each Licensing Committee receive appropriate training.
- 27 Objective 6 - Officers and Licensing Committees to consider opportunities for greater harmonisation of policies
- 28 Objective 7 - Health, Safety and Well Being of Staff
- 29 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.

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

- 29 Financial implications have been dealt with in the body of the report.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 19 This is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership.

### Equality Assessment

- 20 This is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Performance Indicator update report 2016

Appendix B - Licensing Partnership Service Plan

## **Background Papers:**

None

**Mr Richard Wilson**

**Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services**